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BRITISH AUTHORS

TAUCHNITZ EDITION.

VOL. 2113.

THE "LADY MAUD" BY W. CLARK RUSSELL.

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. II.

THE "LADY MAUD:"

SCHOONER YACHT.

A NARRATIVE OF

HER LOSS ON ONE OF THE BAHAMA CAYS,

FROM THE ACCOUNT OF A GUEST ON BOARD.

BY

W. CLARK RUSSELL,

AUTHOR OF "A SAILOR'S SWEETHEART," ETC. ETC.

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IN TWO VOLUMES.—VOL. II.

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BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1883.

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THE LADY MAUD:

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CHAPTER I.

UNTIL the morning of the —— of July, that day making it over five weeks since we had sailed from Southampton, nothing happened that is worth recording. But on that morning the *Lady Maud*, being then under a mainsail, foresail, and two jibs, the wind to the Northward of East, and fresh, a squall blew up, and half an hour after a heavy gale of wind had stripped us of every fragment of canvas, saving the close-reefed foresail; but the wind increasing in fury, this had to be furled, and we lay breasting the monstrous seas under bare poles, our topmasts housed, and the yards on deck.

Taking it altogether, the gale was as fierce a one of its kind as ever I can remember; never indeed approaching the force of a cyclone, though at midnight it came very near to being a hurricane. For hours and hours the ocean was like wool and the

sky like ink. The heavy seas which rolled up carried the yacht bodily away to the westwards, and I reckoned that the average drift of the vessel was not less than one and three-quarter nautical miles an hour for hard upon seventy-two hours of storm.

The gale blew for three days, and they were the worst three days that ever I had passed. The *Lady Maud*, though a powerful boat, and large for her class, was but a small craft to fight such a sea as then ran; nor did she make the weather we might have hoped from her beam and sheer. There were times when her plunges left nothing of her visible but her after-deck down to a few feet before the mainmast; she looked to be smothered in a boiling cauldron; and one of those seas tore up the whole length of starboard hencoops, and shot the fragments overboard like a flight of arrows, and robbed us of two dozens of fine poultry.

Our condition below was truly pitiable. It was the worst part of the storm. The gale was like a sirocco for the temperature of it, and the cabin, with the skylight closed and the companion shut to prevent the water from washing down, was hot enough to bake a joint in. But add to this intolerable atmosphere the frightful pitching, the sensation of being shot into the air with terrific force and velocity, and then falling with such headlong, sicken-

ingly swift descent, as to make you hold your breath, with the belief that the hull would split open as it crashed into the deafening hollow; whilst the whole fabric rang with the howling and roaring of the tormented seas outside, and the raging of the furious blast along the dark sky; and every now and again there would be a deadly pause in the yacht's motion after one of her wild plunges, as if the sea she had shipped over her bows, and that had washed aft in a tempest of foam, had proved too much for her, and she was going down. Add this, I say!

No skill, no experience was of any avail at a time like this. The yacht lay to under bare poles, and the helm lashed, and whoever happened to be on deck to watch her stood right aft, for the seas which swept the forecastle made that part of the vessel as perilous as a raft, and no man could have stayed there without being lashed; nay, even then he would have stood the chance of being drowned by the perpetual flying of water over him.

But our miserable condition below was lamentably aggravated by Lady Brookes' agony of apprehension. I believe, had the gale lasted another day, she would have died outright of fright. No food that I heard of passed her lips. She lay upon her swinging bed, moaning and screaming, until the power of making those noises failed her. At one

period, indeed, her mind grew deranged, for I afterwards learnt that she had charged her husband with bringing her on this voyage merely to kill her, and stormed and raved at him, until he ran in a state of distraction from her cabin.

His distress was truly deplorable. Between the horror of the gale on the one hand, and the alarming state of his wife on the other, he lost all nerve. I remember on one of those evenings being alone in the cabin, listening to the terrifying and thrilling bursting of the seas against the groaning, struggling, staggering hull, and very gravely doubting whether any of us would ever see the sun rise again, when Sir Mordaunt came through the door that led to the sleeping berths, and passing his arm round an iron stanchion, stood looking at me without speaking a word, and his face as white as death. There was an expression of horror in his eyes which made them singularly brilliant and affecting to see, and I then took notice that he appeared to have aged by at least ten years since the morning.

"Come, come," I exclaimed, encouragingly, "let us keep up our hearts, if only for the sake of the women. You know Jack's old saying—'While she creaks she holds.'"

"That may be," he replied, in a wild manner;

"but oh, Walton, it's killing my wife! it's killing her! it's killing her!" he repeated.

As I had not seen her, she having kept her cabin from the first hour of the gale, I could not offer an opinion; but had she been anybody else but his wife, I believe I should have told him that a woman who could make such a hullabaloo as she had raised was not a person to die off in a hurry.

"Oh, Walton," he continued, "it's a dreadful blow to have my cherished hopes defeated in this way. I brought her against her will, and yet God knows I acted as I thought for the best. Even should this miserable gale leave us alive, it will have upset all the good she has derived from the cruise."

"I should strongly recommend you," said I, "to abandon all thoughts of returning home in the *Lady Maud*. Your wisest course will be to land your wife at Kingston, and accompany her to England in one of the mail steamers. It is quite clear that Lady Brookes' nerves will not suffer her to receive any benefit from the sea."

"And can you be surprised?" he cried. "Feel this now!" and as he spoke, the yacht seemed to jump clean out of the water, reeling in her somersault until the edge of the swinging-trays touched the upper deck, and I, from the port side of the cabin, looked down at Sir Mordaunt as though my

head was out of window and I was surveying a man on the pavement below. And then came one of those falls which always filled me with dread. The crash of the hull striking the water was as heart-shaking as the explosion of a great piece of ordnance, and the thunder of the near surges roared like the echo of the report. The deadly pause followed; you could have heard the foam upon the deck seething and hissing to the very doors of the companion, and presently, when the brave little vessel lifted again, my face was wet with sweat. Ay, call me what name you please, my fine fellow; but had you sat in that stifling cabin, and felt that prodigious heave and fall, and waited through that frightful pause to see if she would lift again, you must have a stronger head and heart than I, not to have perspired at every pore as I did.

It was impossible to go on talking. Even the few sentences we had exchanged had to be shouted, so wild and mixed were the sounds in the cabin. Norie lay sick and stupefied in his bunk; he had been there since the preceding day. Miss Tuke and Mrs. Stretton were with Lady Brookes. The widow, I had heard from Sir Mordaunt, had been unremitting in her attentions to her ladyship, and Miss Tuke had borne herself with great courage. Indeed, those two women were the real heroes of

that gale; we men made but poor figures by comparison.

But to cut this part of my log short: the gale left us at noon on a day that made the third day of furious storm. The wind fined down with astonishing rapidity. It seemed, indeed, to drop completely and at once. I went on deck to look about me, and stood transfixed and absolutely awed by the appearance of the swell. The height and power of the liquid mountains pass all power of description in words. The monstrous acclivities took their colour from the sky, and wore the appearance of molten lead. They poured their gigantic folds along without a break of foam to relieve the livid, heaving, unnatural aspect; and such was the rolling of the yacht, that with every dip of her gunwales she seemed to lay her masts along the water, and it was as much as a man's life was worth for him to let go his hold.

Figure such a sea, without a breath of air to ruffle the gigantic oil-smooth coils! The small rise in the glass did not encourage me to believe that we were going to have it all our own way yet. Clinging to the companion, I gazed around me, to see what damage the gale had done us. Forward I could trace no mischief beyond the loss of the hencoops; but, on looking at the davits, I saw that

the fine quarter-boat with which we had rescued the survivors of the barque's crew had been smashed to pieces—she was no more than a mere skeleton, the stem and stern-posts hanging by the tackles. But the long boat amidships on chocks was safe, though it was strange that she should have escaped the seas which had washed over the bows.

The first to come on deck was Sir Mordaunt. He stood looking around him with the utmost astonishment.

"I can hardly credit my senses!" he exclaimed. "Why, just now it was blowing fit to tear the masts out! Is this only a lull, Walton? It may burst upon us from another quarter in a minute."

"I hope not," said I, "and I hardly think so. Once in my experience—it was in my first voyage—a gale left us as this has done, blew itself clean out, and fell dead. But I remember that it left a better sky than that," I continued, casting my eye on the sooty stooping pall, and noticing the gradual thickening up of the horizon all round.

"How frightfully the yacht rolls!" he cried. "I hope we may not swing our masts overboard. To be reduced to a sheer hulk would about complete the misery of the last three days."

"No fear of that," I answered, "with those top-masts housed and those preventer backstays set up.

Is that your doing, Mr. Tripshore?" I called, pointing to those additional supports to the masts, and addressing the mate, who stood holding on to one of the belaying pins which girdled the foot of the mainmast.

"Yes, sir," he replied, "and they're all wanted. If there was any chance of this here tumbling lasting, I don't know but what I'd recommend Mr. Purchase to swifter in the rigging. But now the wind's gone the swell will go too."

"Are we booked for any more bad weather, think you?" asked Sir Mordaunt.

"Well, it's hard to say, sir," said the mate, throwing a look round. "It's drawing on thick, but if any wind comes, it won't come hard whilst that fog hangs."

"Where's Purchase?"

"Below, sir, working out his dead reckoning."

"We ought to know what he makes it," said I. "We've been blown by a long slant to the westwards, and if the last observation he took—four days since, mind—was correct, his course should be to the eastward until he can get sights."

"I'll speak to him," said the baronet. "Tripshore, tell Purchase to come to me the moment he has worked out his reckoning, and request him to bring his chart."

The mate went below.

"Sir Mordaunt," said I, "will you tell me how Lady Brookes does? Is she better to-day?"

"She is not worse, Walton; but you will find her thin, and sadly changed. I have made up my mind to do as you suggested. I'll go home with her in one of the mail steamers, and Purchase can sail the yacht to England. We will settle the matter later on. Only let this dreadful swell go down. I can hardly collect my thoughts."

He said this at an instant when an unusually heavy mountain of water heeled the yacht over until she lay almost on her beam ends; the spray shot in a fury of smoke through the submerged scupper-holes, and the toppling sea rose above the level of the bulwark rail. Had we let go at that moment we should have whisked overboard as neatly as a man holding on to the gutter of a roof would drop into the road by relaxing his grasp. The wildness of the tumble appeared to daze the baronet, whose ashen-grey face showed such ravages from the worry, anxiety, and alarm that had possessed him during the storm, as I never should have believed the human countenance capable of receiving the imprint of in so short a period.

As I stood looking at him, Mrs. Stretton came up the companion. I helped her up, and gave her

a rope's end to hold by. She was very pale, and seemed worn out; her eyes had lost their brilliancy, and she reminded me of the appearance she had presented on the day of her rescue.

"You are wise to come on deck," exclaimed Sir Mordaunt. "I am afraid you have suffered much from your confinement below and your devoted attention to my wife. Believe me deeply sensible of the sympathy and kindness you have shown her."

"I owe you my life," she replied simply. "I shall never be able to repay you—nor you, Mr. Walton." And then looking at the sea, she cried, "The wind is gone, and yet in the cabin it feels sometimes as if the yacht were rolling over."

"We have seen the worst of it," said I; "though I should prefer the sunshine to that mist which is gathering around us. Is Miss Tuke coming up?"

"No, as Lady Brookes is asleep, Miss Tuke has gone to lie down," she answered. "What a brave lady she is! In the worst of the gale she never showed the least fear. Oh, I should tell you, Sir Mordaunt, that before Lady Brookes fell asleep we got her to eat a plate of cold chicken and drink some brandy and water."

"I am glad to hear that; the food will put some strength into her," exclaimed the poor gentleman,

with a little show of cheerfulness in his manner, that to me somehow made his aspect and tones exceedingly pathetic.

"Her ladyship is no longer afraid of you, then," said I softly in the widow's ear.

"No; but Mr. Norie was very wise to keep me banished whilst there was a chance of my frightening her," she replied, whispering. "You cannot imagine what a dreadful condition her nerves are in. Her behaviour during the gale was like that of a mad woman. What would have been my sufferings had I been as timid as she when I was with the poor men on the wreck?" She shuddered, and sighed convulsively, and added, "I am so weary of the sea! it is so cold, so cruel, so merciless! Would to God it had spared my poor love to me! The loss of all that we owned in the world would have been a little matter then."

Here Tripshore came on deck.

"Will Purchase be long?" called out Sir Mordaunt.

"I don't think so, sir," answered the mate, giving me a queer look, the meaning of which I could not guess.

All this while we lay floundering and wallowing under our lower-masts, with not a fragment of canvas

showing. Sail was of no use to us until some wind came. An hour's idle beating and flogging upon those shooting, staggering, and swinging spars, would have done our canvas more harm than three months of fair wear. The schooner lay broadside to the swell, that now and again depressed her so sharply that the green water poured over the bulwark-rail on to the deck, and went washing as high as a man's knee over to the other side with the send of the vessel; and the jerking and straining of the masts was so violent, that it would not have greatly surprised me had the chain plates drawn, and the lofty sticks gone away overboard.

About twenty minutes after Sir Mordaunt had sent for him, Purchase emerged, and came clawing and lurching along to where we stood. He had a chart under his arm and a sheet of paper in one hand. His face was unusually red, his cap was drawn low down over his forehead, and fake upon fake of blue spotted neckcloth coiled round his neck gave him such a strangled look as was disagreeable to see.

"Purchase," said Sir Mordaunt, "I am anxious to know what you make our position. We must have been driven a good many leagues to the westward, and the weather looks very ugly—very ugly yet, Purchase. No sign of the sun, and no promise

of a star to-night;" and he stared upwards and then around him with a dismal shake of the head.

The old man made no answer to this, but leaning against the skylight so as to balance himself, he opened the chart.

"Here, Mr. Tripshore," he exclaimed, in somewhat thick accents, "come and put your hand upon this chart where it curls up."

This was done, and Sir Mordaunt drew near the skipper, holding tightly by the skylight. I stood on the other side, but the chart was intelligible to me though inverted. Likewise I had a good view of Purchase, who, the moment I looked at him close, I could see had been drinking. Sir Mordaunt found this out also at once, no doubt by the smell of the man's breath (for he stood next him). He drew up suddenly and stared at him, and then glanced at me, but said nothing.

"Here's the place where I makes the yacht to be," said Purchase, pressing his square thumb upon the chart. "Ye can read the latitood and longitood," he added, speaking in a greasy, ventral, low comedian sort of voice, and surveying me with his small wandering eyes.

"What do you make it?" demanded Sir Mordaunt, with a sternness I had never seen in him before, nor should have believed possible in him.

The old fellow raised the sheet of paper to his face, and after bothering over the figures, answered, "Latitood, twenty-five degrees ten minutes; longitood, seventy-three degrees five minutes."

"What drift have you allowed for the three days?" I inquired.

He made no reply.

"Don't you hear Mr. Walton's question?" cried Sir Mordaunt.

"I've got northen to do with Mr. Walton, sir," he answered. "You're my master."

The baronet repeated my question.

"About thirty mile," he answered, keeping his thumb stuck upon the chart in the queerest posture, as though he wanted to spin his hand.

"You may add another sixty miles to that, Sir Mordaunt, and then be within the mark," said I.

The old skipper looked at me with wandering eyes and a most evil expression in his face. I waited for him to insult me, when I should have told him he was drunk, and talked to him, as I should have known how from my old sea training; but he held his peace, perhaps because he saw my intention.

"Here I see is the Crooked Island Passage," said Sir Mordaunt, after pausing to give Purchase time to answer my objection.

"Bearing South by West half West," said Purchase. "'Taint my idee to try for that passage, sir. I shall haul away to the eastwards under heavy canvas till the weather clears."

"That's just what you suggested, Walton," said Sir Mordaunt, with a gleam of satisfaction on his face.

Purchase looked at me and was about to speak, but the yacht dipping heavily, he gave with it, lost his balance, and went rolling like a barrel down against the bulwarks. This was an accident that might easily have befallen him even had he been perfectly sober; but as we all perceived he was partially intoxicated, his tumble was like an emphasis upon his condition, and Sir Mordaunt looked away with an air of great disgust and irritation from the square scrambling figure as the old noodle got up and lurched towards the skylight, with a purple face shining with perspiration.

Mrs. Stretton whispered, "He is intoxicated, Mr. Walton. He is not in a fit state to talk to Sir Mordaunt, and explain his navigation."

"This is not the first time," I replied, in a low voice. "But Sir Mordaunt will see him with my eyes now, I hope. He is less qualified in my opinion to command this vessel than the cook."

"That will do," said the baronet to Purchase. "You can take the chart below again."

"That's what I makes it, sir," replied the man, again reading the sheet of paper, and trying to steady his voice and comport himself as though he would have us see his fall was no evidence of unsteady legs. "Latitood, twenty-five ten; longitood, seventy-three five." And so saying, he rolled up the chart very slowly, and deliberately took a prolonged view of the sea, and, watching his chance, sheered over to the starboard bulwarks, and clawed himself abreast of the hatchway, down which he disappeared.

Sir Mordaunt stood near me in moody silence, until Mrs. Stretton, who grew fatigued by her posture, asked me to hand her to the companion. I assisted her to descend the steps, and then returned.

"I am afraid you are right in your views of Purchase," said Sir Mordaunt. "He is again in liquor, and I fear the abominable habit is confirmed. Three times we have detected him, and who knows how often he may have been intoxicated in the night time, when we were asleep? I am greatly deceived and disappointed. I could not have believed he would misbehave again after the conversation I had with him. But I shall say nothing to him. Let him carry the yacht to Kingston, which I have no doubt he'll be able to manage, and I will hand the vessel over to some agents, to send to England. We have

all had enough of this cruise. For myself, I can honestly say the last week has cured me of my taste for ocean sailing. Henceforth—if I am spared for any more yachting—I shall never go a mile beyond English waters."

"Well, as you say, the man has navigated us so far, and he may be able to accomplish the rest; and perhaps you are wise in resolving to say nothing to him," said I. "But he is out in his dead reckoning —of that I am positive; though, as he means to stand to the eastward, his miscalculations ought not to greatly matter."

"When should we make Jamaica, think you?"

"In about ten days or so, with anything of a breeze," I answered. "I am assuming, of course, that Purchase's latitude is correct. His longitude I am sure is wrong."

"After his conduct to-day I shall stand no more on ceremony," said he. "I'll not consult the fellow's feelings. If you will take an observation—of course, if a chance occurs," casting a forlorn look at the sky—"you'll greatly oblige me."

"I can take a star in his watch below. He needn't know that I am topping him."

"Why didn't you suggest that before?" asked he, reproachfully.

"Pray remember how sensitive you have been about the man. You staved off all criticism."

"Because I had confidence. And mind, Walton, I am only shaken now because he has broken his promise, and I find him drunk again. But you will do as you suggest? It will ease both our minds to know that his reckoning tallies with ours. And though he should have under-estimated our drift to the west, that will not make his observations incorrect."

"Certainly not," said I. "But look there—and there! We shall get no stars to-night. The horizon's not a mile off; and did mortal man ever see the water of so hideously ugly a colour before?"

The thick mist that had been slowly gathering round, coming up from every point of the compass, like the four walls and ceiling which met and crushed the miserable prisoner in the story, had made the visible sea a mere narrow circle of water, which every moment was growing smaller and smaller. The swell, however, was fast falling, though it was still ponderous enough in all conscience; and, owing to the diminished compass of the deep, had a more formidable appearance than it wore even when at its worst, owing to the majestic waving of the near horizon. The decks were full of currents of air, caused by the wallowing of the schooner, but

there was no wind on the sea. The folds of the swell were as polished as glass. Yet the creeping girdle of mist, and the violent panting of the ocean, and the malignant, sallow, bluish tint of the water, as though it was putrefied, and the lowering lead of the sullen motionless sky over our staggering masts, filled the mind with a spirit of foreboding miserable to feel and impossible to express.

When the luncheon hour arrived I followed Sir Mordaunt into the cabin, where we found Miss Tuke and Mrs. Stretton. Before taking his seat, Sir Mordaunt went to his wife's berth, and then returned, accompanied by Norie, who, although greatly nauseated by the detestable rolling, was making a manful fight with it. He had been in attendance on Lady Brookes for the greater part of the morning. This was the first time I had seen him for many hours, and we shook hands like people meeting after a long absence.

I found that Mrs. Stretton was to lunch with us, which I attributed to Miss Tuke's invitation. But now that she was constantly with Lady Brookes, there was no reason why she should not make one of our party, and drop her furtive life in Carey's cabin, and her secret meals with that lady's-maid. I was heartily pleased to see her among us. I had all along felt that Norie's banishment of her, merely

because Lady Brookes might take fright at any reference to the horrors of the time spent upon the water-logged barque, was cruel usage to give to the poor shipwrecked woman, whose sex and loneliness, and the dreadful sufferings she had endured, gave her a powerful claim upon our tenderness.

"Do you think we shall have any more stormy weather, Mr. Walton?" asked Miss Tuke.

I answered that it would be very unusual if we met with another gale, as this was not hurricane month. "The air," said I, "is very thick, but a little wind may scatter that, and expose the blue sky again, which I for one shall be glad to see."

"The motion of the yacht is much less violent than it was," said Sir Mordaunt. "The swell goes down fast, thank Heaven."

"Walton," cried Norie, "you do not catch me coming to sea again. An old sailor once said to me, 'Master, a square foot of dry land is better than an acre of shipboard.' And often did that observation rise in my mind whilst I was praying in the gale, and wondering how long a stout young fellow like me would take to drown."

"If your fright was so great, I wonder your hair preserved its colour," said Miss Tuke.

"My fright was very great; I don't deny it. Several times I thought we had upset," he answered.

"That's an honest admission for our friend to make in the face of such courage as you and Mrs. Stretton showed," said I to Miss Tuke.

"The bravery was Mrs. Stretton's," she answered. "Had she not encouraged me, I should have been as frightened as Mr. Norie."

"The fog must be upon us," said the baronet. "How uncommonly dark the cabin has become."

"Hark! What are they doing on deck?" cried Norie, whose nerves were in a condition to be easily alarmed.

"Making sail," I answered, hearing the tramp of feet and the sounds of coils of running gear flung down. "There is a breeze coming, or arrived."

In a few moments the vessel heeled over to starboard, sure evidence that canvas was on her and that wind was blowing. The inclination greatly steadied her, and there was a sensation of buoyancy in her movements as she swung over the swell.

"Can you read that tell-tale over your head, Sir Mordaunt?" I called out.

He stood up and looked at the compass with a pair of glasses that dangled on his waistcoat. The gloom was so deep that he had some difficulty to decipher the points. After a little, he said—

"We are heading South East by East."

I reflected, and said—

"That is not our course. Tripshore should be advised not to make any southing. We have a whole nest of islands under our lee."

He interrupted me.

"Let us go on deck, Walton, and see what they are about."

I threw down my knife and fork, and ran for my hat. Had it not been for the tepid temperature, emerging through the companion into the open air would have been like shooting into a London November day. The mist was as thick as smoke, greyish rather than white, owing to the sun being buried; and had you flung a biscuit over the yacht's side, it would have disappeared before it touched the water, so short was the span of visible sea from the yacht to the concealing folds of vapour. The mist was like a driving rain, and the decks were dark with the saturation of it. The breeze was sweeping the vapour in masses along with it, and whitening the near water with streaks and glancings of foam. The yacht was close-hauled. They had set the double-reefed mainsail and standing and outer jibs, and this canvas was as flat as pancakes under the tautly-bowsed sheets. Indeed, our main boom was very nearly amidships. The send of the head swell stopped the schooner's way, and she was jammed too close to the wind to take much pro-

pulsion from the canvas that was stretched like drum-skins fore and aft her. I was bitterly vexed to find the wind sticking in the east. Tripshore came up to us the moment we appeared.

"Do you think you are wise in making any southing?" I asked him.

"Why, sir," he answered, "if Mr. Purchase's reckoning is right, we have plenty of sea room with our head at this."

"But Mr. Walton is persuaded that we are further to the westward than Purchase allows," said Sir Mordaunt.

"Give the matter a moment's consideration, Tripshore," said I. "Will you agree with Purchase that our drift during the gale was only thirty miles?"

"I'm agreeable to double that, sir," he answered. "But even then there's nothing in the way, heading as we go."

"Fetch the chart," exclaimed Sir Mordaunt. "There's only one road to be taken—and that's the right one."

The man quitted the deck, and I walked aft, to see what leeway we were making. The wake was short, broad, and oily, and veered away on our weather quarter. With my hand upon the compass card, I made it about two points. This was as

much leeway as one would look for in a ship under close-reefed topsails. It did not surprise me, however. I knew, under certain conditions, that few schooners could hold their own on a wind better than the *Lady Maud*, but the luff choked her. She was under small canvas, and, looking as she was almost right in the wind's eye, it was wonderful that she made any headway at all.

To save this leeway, I thought it would be advisable to ease off the sheets a trifle; but the responsibility of making any suggestion in the midst of weather as thick as mud, and in the face of my complete doubts of Purchase's accuracy as to the position he affirmed us to be in, weighed down my anxiety, and determined me to hold my peace for the present. The weather, I said to myself, may clear before nightfall, and then I shall be able to find out where we are.

After a brief absence, Tripshore returned with the chart. He laid it upon the skylight and we bent over it.

"You see, sir," said the mate to me, "if Mr. Purchase be out even by three times the drift he allows for, this here course of South East by East heads us well into the open, away from that there raffle," indicating the Bahama group to the south of Providence Channel.

"But suppose our longitude should be to the west of 74°?" said I. "Go and look over the stern, and mark the leeway, and then take notice of this island," pointing to the island of San Salvador.

"Ay, Walton," exclaimed Sir Mordaunt, "but why do you want to give us so much west longitude? Allowing that Purchase is out as far as you say, you don't believe that he is further out still?"

"I don't know," said I. "I have no faith in his calculations. Who can swear that his latitude is right?"

Sir Mordaunt peered at the chart, and then said—

"What do you propose, Walton?"

"Since you ask me plump," I answered, "I should like to see the yacht on the starboard tack."

"That 'ud be running away from where you want to go to, sir, wouldn't it?" said Tripshore, smiling, and speaking as if he thought me needlessly nervous.

"We certainly don't want to do that," cried Sir Mordaunt, quickly. "We must get to Kingston as soon as ever we can."

I made no answer to this. Though Tripshore meant no offence whatever by smiling, he had annoyed me, nevertheless, by doing so.

"Go and call Purchase up," said Sir Mordaunt to the mate, "and tell him to bring the log-book, that we may go into the matter thoroughly. The fellow is not too drunk, I suppose, to explain his workings," he added aside to me.

I noticed that the mate hesitated.

"Cut along now, Tripshore!" exclaimed the baronet, impatiently. "This is an anxious time, and I must have Purchase on deck."

The man went away. At this juncture Miss Tuke and Norie showed their heads above the companion.

"Don't come on deck, Ada, don't come on deck!" instantly called out Sir Mordaunt. "This mist will wet you through. Norie, oblige me by handing my niece below; and keep the ladies amused there, will you?"

"With pleasure," answered the doctor. "But I say, Sir Mordaunt, if it's too damp for us, it's too damp for you and that fragile creature, Walton. The air is full of rheumatism."

"Yes, yes; we'll be following you shortly. Away with you, Ada." And as they disappeared he said, "I don't want them to suspect any grounds for anxiety. My wife knows that the gale is gone, and is much easier in her mind. Ada's eyes are like a carpenter's drill. And faith, Walton, she does not

need to be so sharp either, for your face looks as full of trouble as an egg is full of meat."

"I *am* bothered," I answered. "It's a devilish bad job, Sir Mordaunt, to be with a skipper you can't trust, and whose calculations you are sure are wrong, in weather of this kind, and with those leagues of Bahama Islands dead to leeward of us. And do you know, the wind freshens. It has breezed up since we have been on deck."

"Why doesn't Purchase come?" he exclaimed impatiently.

Just then the mate arrived. He looked greatly worried, but without any hesitation he marched up to Sir Mordaunt and said, "I'm sorry to say I can't rouse Mr. Purchase up, sir."

Sir Mordaunt looked at him with astonishment, and then muttered, "It's *too* bad! it's *too* bad!"

"Has he been drinking since he went below, Tripshore?" I asked.

"He has, sir. His cabin is full of the smell of liquor. It's not pleasant for me to peach on a shipmate, but if ye'll go below, gentlemen, you'll see it all with your own eyes. He bargained for a four hour's spell, and has nipped fit to last him that time."

Sir Mordaunt took two or three impetuous strides.

"What's to be done?" he said, confronting me.

"What's to be done?" I ejaculated, almost contemptuously, I fear. "Why break the drunken rascal out of hand, and take care to set the Board of Trade at him when you get ashore; so that, by depriving the incompetent 'longshoreman of his certificate, you may put it out of his power to imperil human life."

My poor friend eyed me anxiously, and then turned to the mate.

"Very well," said he. "Mr. Tripshore, you will take charge of this schooner."

The man touched his cap and was about to speak.

"For God's sake let us have no refusal," cried Sir Mordaunt quickly. "Mr. Walton will navigate the vessel."

"The run is only to Jamaica, Mr. Tripshore," said I. "Another week of sailing at the outside, I hope. If you like, I will keep watch and watch with you. Sir Mordaunt knows I have had confidence in you as a seaman from the beginning. You owe me something for my good opinion, so oblige me by giving the baronet the answer he wants."

The man still hung in the wind; but after thinking a little, he said, "All right, sir. I'll take charge. You may depend on my doing my best."

"At four o'clock the watch below will be turned up, Sir Mordaunt," said I, "and the crew had then better lay aft, that they may be told of the new arrangement."

"Certainly. Do whatever you think proper," he answered, looking harassed to death by this new bother.

I went below to consult the glass, but it offered no promise of improvement in the weather. Norie and Miss Tuke sat in the cabin, and the former wanted to know why Sir Mordaunt and I kept in the drizzle. I made some answer and went up the steps, envious enough of the doctor's quiet enjoyment of Miss Ada's company to make me willing to call him aside and alarm him with a representation of our situation, and to stop his pleasure.

I went over to the chart again, and studied it attentively for some time, whilst Sir Mordaunt stood talking with Tripshore. The real trouble to me was, not being able to depend upon the observations Purchase had taken on the day before the gale. It is necessary that I should dwell upon this, that the sequel may be clear to you. Could I have been sure that his sights on that day were accurate, I should have been able to work out our position by the dead reckoning of those stormy days, so as to come near enough to the truth. But how was I to

trust such data as an illiterate seaman like Purchase could furnish me with from his sextant? A trifling error by being repeated would bring him fearfully wide of the mark in a corner of the Atlantic that is studded with dangerous reefs and low-lying islands. I own I now sincerely deplored my want of resolution in not insisting upon checking the man's calculations by observations of my own. I had acted mistakenly in suffering Sir Mordaunt to put me off discharging what was a duty owing to every person in that yacht by his weak and unwise tenderness for Purchase's "feelings." And I was also greatly to blame in not having ascertained the latitude and longitude from the steamer into which the rescued men had been conveyed, so that we might have compared her reckoning with Purchase's.

But ten years' absence from sea had very greatly disqualified me professionally, as any man may suppose; and the weight of my present responsibility was not a little increased by this sense of my deficiency.

My disposition now was to put the schooner on the starboard tack. With her head at north-east, the whole clear North Atlantic (as I then believed) would be under our bows. Yet Sir Mordaunt's unwillingness to go north when our way lay south influenced me in spite of myself, and I could not

forget Tripshore's quiet smile that was like ridiculing my anxiety.

I rolled up the chart, and going over to the mate, advised him to take a heave of the lead.

"Very good, sir," he answered, and went forward to give the necessary instructions.

After a little the deep-sea lead was got up, and the line stretched along. The vessel's way was stopped by her head being shoved into the wind and the lead dropped overboard. The "Watch O watch!" rang mournfully on the breeze as the fakes fell from the men's hands, until it came to Tripshore, who was stationed right aft. Seventy four fathoms went overboard without giving us any soundings—hard upon four hundred and fifty feet, and no bottom.

"That looks as if the ocean was still under us, sir," said the mate cheerfully, as the line was snatched in a block, and the watch tailed on to haul it in.

Sir Mordaunt stood looking on, much impressed by these proceedings. He plucked up when he saw Tripshore grin and heard his remark, and said to me, "There is evidently plenty of water here, Walton."

"So there ought to be," I answered. "Meanwhile, Tripshore, I should recommend you to keep

that lead-line coiled down ready for an occasional heave. When you can't see you must feel."

All this time the mist remained abominably thick. It was, indeed, a very fine rain, and it blew along our decks in a kind of smoke. The swell was greatly abated, but the heads of the seas as they arched out of the vapour broke quickly, and with a certain fierceness, and poured in foam against our weather bow. The schooner, in consequence of being sailed so close, crushed through the water heavily and sluggishly, throwing off the spray to leeward in broad seething masses. With her housed topmasts and streaming decks she looked more to be struggling round the Horn than ratching in July upon the western Atlantic. And, indeed, nothing but a low temperature was wanted to make me believe myself off the Horn, with the long Pacific swell under me, and the air as thick as a feather-bed, and a sharp breeze rattling down out of the mist; just as I remembered it when our latitude was 63^0 south, though then the decks were covered with ice, and the salt water froze as fast as it was chucked aboard.

At four o'clock the watch below was called. Tripshore came to me and asked respectfully if I meant to stand Purchase's watch. I answered that I had offered to do so, and was quite willing to keep my word.

"I've been turning it over in my mind, sir," said the mate, "and I doubt if the men 'ud feel quite easy. You know what sailors are, sir. The crew have been taught to think of me and Mr. Purchase as their bosses, and of you as passenger."

"Who'll take turn and turn about with you, then?"

"There's Bill Burton, sir. Bill's our oldest hand, and a good man. The men 'ud mind Bill Burton."

Sir Mordaunt, who stood near, said, "As you are to navigate the yacht, Walton, it is only right that others should do the practical part. Tripshore takes Purchase's place, and so let Burton take Tripshore's, if, as you say,"—to the mate—"he is the best man for that duty."

"I'll warrant Bill Burton as a steady man, sir," said Tripshore. "He's as good a look-out as any sailor that I was ever shipmates with, and he's something more than a yachtsman."

"Let us consider that settled," exclaimed Sir Mordaunt. "And now the men should be told of the change. Send them aft, Tripshore, or the watch below will be going to bed." And as the mate went forward the baronet added, "Will you talk to them, Walton?"

"They'd like it better from you," said I. "You pay them. You are their master."

"Very well," said he, and he fell to stroking down his beard whilst he thought over what he should say to them.

In a few minutes they were all assembled. Most of them were in oilskins, which glistened with the wet, and they stood looking eagerly—this being a novel summons indeed, and they could not imagine what it meant. Sir Mordaunt coughed and fussed and then rapped out:—

"I've sent for you to say that Mr. Purchase is no longer captain of my yacht. At this moment he is drunk in his cabin and incapable of coming on deck. Such conduct is scandalous in a responsible man. I don't believe. he knows where we are within twenty or thirty leagues, and yet there he is in his cabin, drunk and useless, and the weather so thick that you cannot see a boat's length from the side." ("It isn't the first time, sir," sung out one of the men.) "I know that. It's the third time. On the second occasion I gave him a good talking to, and he promised on his word as a man that he would not offend again. He's no longer captain. Our lives are too precious to be in the hands of a drunkard, though I always believed him to be a good seaman." (Some of the men laughed, but Sir Mordaunt took no notice.) "Mr. Tripshore will have command until we reach Kingston. Meanwhile, he will want some-

body to help him to keep watch, and so I select William Burton."

The man addressed made a stride, and looked around much astonished.

"You and Tripshore will head the watches," said Sir Mordaunt, "and I'll trust to your being a smart seaman to keep a bright look out and help us all to bring the *Lady Maud* safely to an anchorage."

"I'm willing to obey any orders, sir," said the man, who was a short, thick-set, intelligent-looking fellow, with earrings, and a quantity of ringlets over his forehead and down the back of his neck, "but I hope this here setting me to head my watch means no difference 'twixt me and my mates? I'm only a plain sailor man, and don't want to be better nor my equils."

"They'll obey your orders, of course," answered Sir Mordaunt.

"That'll be all right, Billy; don't bother about that, mate," said a voice.

Just then old Purchase made his appearance. He stood a short distance before the mainmast, holding on to the little companion that led to the part of the vessel where his cabin was. The absorptive power of his "bibulous clay," as Southey calls the drunkard's body, had drained the liquor

away from his head; but it was easy to see that he was by no means yet recovered, and it looked as if the sight of Sir Mordaunt made him unwilling to trust his legs. He blinked at us in wonder at seeing all hands together in a crowd on the quarter-deck, but was too muddled to perceive or guess the cause of the assembly. The crew were not conscious of his presence, but we who looked forward saw him at once.

Tripshore sidled up to me and whispered, "He lay like a dead man, when I tried to rouse him up. But he can smell anything going on, and he knows how to pull himself together, Purchase do."

It was probably the seeing Tripshore edge up to me and mumble in my ear that made old Purchase roar out violently, "How was it no one called me at eight bells?" and knitting his brows and looking very fierce, the better to disguise the lingering effects of the drink in him, he let go his hold of the companion and came lurching along towards us.

At the sound of his voice all the men looked around. He stopped after making a few strides, and planting himself on his legs by setting them wide apart, in which posture he presented the most absurd figure that ever I saw in my life, he roared out again to Tripshore to explain why he hadn't called him at eight bells, that is, at four o'clock?

"I'll answer you," exclaimed Sir Mordaunt, very sternly dropping his head on one side and raising his arm. "When some time ago the mate went to your cabin, to tell you I required your presence on deck, he found you in a drunken sleep—too drunk to wake up."

"Me!" said the old fellow, putting on such a face that in an instant half the crew were broadly grinning. "Me—Purchase—too drunk to wake up?" He tapped his breast and fell back a step. "No, no, no," says he, smiling foolishly and looking round him; "this here's some skylarkin' of Ephraim Tripshore's. Tell Sir Mordaunt it's a bit o' tom-foolin', Ephraim. Lor' bless ye, mate! I never was drunk in my life."

"You're drunk now," cried Sir Mordaunt, warmly, seeing nothing diverting in this exhibition. Indeed, all the time he was incessantly glancing behind him at the skylights and companion, as if he feared that some echo of what was passing would reach his wife's ears. "You are superseded, sir. I shall discharge you at Kingston, and perhaps prosecute you for this conduct. You gave me your word that you would drink no more. You have broken your promise. You are a drunken fellow, and utterly unfit for the responsible position you have filled. Go back to your cabin, sir. I have given the command to Mr.

Tripshore, and William Burton will assist him. We shall manage very well without you, and a deal better than with you. So go below, Mr. Purchase, and don't let me see your face again, sir; and if I hear of you swallowing another drop of spirits before you are out of my vessel, I'll have you locked up in your cabin."

All this was delivered with an energy that surprised me in my friend. No doubt it was the nervous irritability induced in him by the worries, anxieties, and dangers of the past few days, and our present uneasy condition, that enabled him to rap out so smartly. The men were astonished at this vehemence in their mild-mannered master, but old Purchase was absolutely confounded. After the baronet had ceased, he stood staring at him with his mouth open; then slowly rolled his eyes around on the faces of the men, as though he would persuade himself by an inspection of their whiskered faces, ashine with the muggy, lukewarm, driving drizzle, that he was not in a drunken dream. Presently his gaze rested upon my face.

"Ha, Mr. Walton!" he bawled, extending his great clenched fist toward me. "It's *you* I've got to thank for this, I suppose. It's you that's pisoned Sir Mordaunt's mind against me!"

I looked at him coldly. He was proceeding.

"Will you go away?" cried Sir Mordaunt.

The old fellow, retreating a step, shook his clenched fist at me.

"*You* call yourself a sailor?" he shouted, in the thickest and deepest notes I had ever heard rumble from him. He drew a deep breath, and added, "You're a marine! You're a sea-cook! A sailor? Why"—he drew another deep breath—"as sure as ye stan' there——"

I was never a man to be menaced. I stepped hurriedly towards him, but at the first movement I made he rounded on his legs and started for the companion; and, drunk as he was, he managed to scull himself along fast enough to swing himself down the companion steps before I could reach the hatch, and vanished amid a half-suppressed shout of laughter from the crew.

Sir Mordaunt had nothing more to say to the men, so they went forward, and Bill Burton, as they called him, was left to stump the deck of the schooner for a couple of hours. I could not help laughing at the gravity and look of importance the man put on. He had a nose like the bill of a hawk, and the wet collected on his face and streamed away from the point of his nose in large drops. He stepped the deck as regularly as a pendulum, his walk extending from the taffrail to abreast of the mainmast, and

every time he came to a stop, before slueing round he would dry his eyes on the knuckles of his claws, take a hard steady squint at the fog on either side and ahead, cast a prolonged look aloft, and so start afresh, swinging along in a gait that was an indescribable roll, his arms swaying athwart his body, and the fingers of his hands curled as though they still grasped a rope.

Sir Mordaunt now went below to change his clothes, which hung upon him like wet paper. I crossed over to Bill Burton as he came along, and said it was a pity that Purchase should not have held his drinking habit in check until he was ashore, or until the weather improved.

"Well, I don't mind telling 'ee, sir, I never took him for much," he answered. "We all knew he was given to"—here the man imitated the action of drinking—"for most of us in our tricks at the wheel in the night, when you gents was turned in, have seen him cruising about in a way that proved his ballast was i' the wrong end of him. But it wasn't for us to take notice."

"I should have supposed the speech he made to you, when the watches were called for the first time, enough to ruin him in the confidence of the crew," said I.

"Ay," he answered. "That was a rum speech

I doubt if he had his head when he talked that slush."

"What drift should you think we made in the gale, Burton? You'll allow for the send of the heavy sea, and recollect that our freeboard was tall enough to scud under every time we were hove up."

He reflected, and said, "Two mile an hour, migh it be?"

"What do you think?"

"Well, I should say that, sir."

"That would bring it hard upon a hundred miles," said I.

"It wouldn't be much less," he answered. "I've been going to leeward two mile an hour under bare poles in a heavier craft than this vessel."

"Purchase allows only thirty miles for drift in the gale," said I.

He went to the rail to spit, as a mark of contempt. "My 'pinion is," said he, coming back, "he never saw a real gale o' wind afore this woyage."

"That's my notion, too," said I. "He's not only out in his dead reckoning, but I thoroughly question whether he was correct in his sights when he last took them. Therefore this thick weather and the wind dead in our eye is something to keep us uneasy. Even if Purchase's reckoning *is* right, the

Bahamas are not far off. What instructions has Tripshore given you?"

"To keep her as close as she'll go, and take a heave of the lead every half hour."

"That's it. And let me add, if the vessel should break off by even a quarter of a point, put her about."

"Ay, ay, sir."

I went to look at the compass, and found it steady. The wind had not increased in weight, but it blew very fresh; and under the double-reefed mainsail the yacht's lee rail lay low upon the smother of foam which the bursting and chopping action of the little schooner threw up around her hull. The mist was as thick as smoke, and the water hardly to be seen outside the line of froth under the vessel.

"Is this thickness going to last?" I said to Burton.

"There's no tellin', sir. If you mustn't trust a squall ye can't see through, what's to be thought of stuff like this here?"

This sort of comfort might have suited Job, but it was of no use to me. I had been on deck all the afternoon, was wet through, as uncomfortable in body as in mind, and thought it about time to follow Sir Mordaunt's example, and dry myself.

"Keep a sharp look-out," said I, "and don't

forget to 'bout ship if she breaks off;" and so saying, I gave my body a hearty swing to shake off the wet and save the cabin carpet, and went below.

Norie was stretched along one of the lockers, reading. I pushed past, being too wet to bother with his questions, and going to my berth, dried and reclothed myself, taking care to lay out my waterproofs in readiness for my next visit on deck. I lingered over this and other little jobs, and when I returned to the cabin the lamps were lighted, and the steward was laying the cloth for dinner. Miss Tuke, her uncle, Mrs. Stretton and Norie were seated in a group near the piano.

My first glance was at the tell-tale compass: the course remained unchanged. Sir Mordaunt, seeing me do this, called out:—

"Every hour of this should be carrying us well to the eastward, Walton."

"With two points leeway?" I exclaimed, with a shrug.

"Is there no means of preventing that leeway?" he asked.

"Setting more canvas would do it," I answered; "but the vessel has as much as she wants. The other way is by easing the helm—but you know I don't advise that. Indeed, I have taken the liberty to order Burton to put the yacht on the other tack

should the wind veer to the south'ard by even a quarter of a point."

All this talk was Hebrew to Norie and the women, who sat looking on and listening.

"No doubt you are right," said the baronet.

"You know," said I, "that I should like to see the yacht on the starboard tack, heading well to the north and east."

"Away from our destination! Let her break off, Walton, before you put Jamaica over her stern," exclaimed Sir Mordaunt, with a dull smile, and gravely shaking his head.

A short silence fell upon us. I broke it by inquiring after Lady Brookes; and then Miss Tuke asked what her uncle and I had been doing on deck all the afternoon, "getting wet through, Mr. Walton, and risking all sorts of illnesses, as Mr. Norie will tell you."

"We've been watching the weather," I answered.

"Not much weather to be seen, Walton," said Norie. "This looks to me like November detached from the other months and out for a cruise on its own account in the Atlantic. I shall behold the sun with interest when it shines forth again. It has not been in sight since the—let me see——" He counted on his fingers. "D'ye call this *summer* cruising?"

"How long shall you stop at Kingston, Sir Mordaunt?" asked Mrs. Stretton.

"I cannot say, madam; but not long, I believe," he answered, with a look at me, to let me know that his intention of abandoning the cruise on his arrival there was not yet proclaimed. "We left England without meaning to touch at any port, unless our fresh water ran short. But the ocean," said he, in a very sober voice, "makes a man's programme an idle thing."

The poor woman sighed at this; and, God knows, she had reason.

Dinner was now served, and we took our seats.

"It is a great pity," said I, "that Lady Brookes keeps herself imprisoned in her cabin. Company and conversation should do her more good than Carey and solitude."

"She is best where she is," said Norie; "at all events, until we get fine weather. Robust fellows like our friend, Sir Mordaunt, have no sympathy with delicate nervous organizations. A hungry man wonders at another's want of appetite. A man whose heart beats strongly wonders at people feeling cold. You should study medicine, Walton, if you want to sympathize widely."

"Mr. Norie means that you should make people suffer first, in order to feel for them," said Miss Tuke.

But talk of this kind was very flat, stale, and unprofitable to me, and I dare say to Sir Mordaunt too, in our present humour. I was repeatedly glancing at the tell-tale, hoping to find the schooner breaking off, that we might have an excuse to get upon the other tack. Although it was only six o'clock, it was as dark as a pocket outside with the fog, and the skylight windows stood like squares of ebony overhead. The heat was no longer an inconvenience, owing to the draughts of chilled air that breezed down through the windsail. Likewise, the swell was greatly moderated, and, though the piping wind raised a bit of a sea, there was nothing discomforting in the movements of the yacht. In truth, we had been well seasoned by the gale. After the mountainous surges of the three days, the tumble that a brisk wind stirred up was not a thing to notice.

Sir Mordaunt was as reserved as I; the others chatted freely. Mrs. Stretton, who had lived a few months in Jamaica, talked about the scenery there and the negroes, and their strange superstitions; and I particularly remember her description of a mountain, seen from the sea at sunrise—how the mountain on top seemed a solid mass of red fire forking out of the snow-white wreaths of clouds and vapour which girdled the lower parts. She spoke with

animation, and her rich accents lent a singular charm to her language. She interested the baronet, in spite of himself; and it was the attention he gave to her speech, whilst she was describing the Jamaica scenes she knew, that warmed her up into fluency and spirit; for she was *triste* enough when we first sat down to dinner, and whenever she was silent and listening to the others, the sad look came into her face. Somehow, I had never felt more sorry for her than I did on this day and at that table.

The comfort and luxury of the rich sparkling interior was made sharply sensible to the appreciation by the dismal, dark, damp, oppressive weather without, and my perception of it heightened by this cause set me contrasting the situation of the poor woman with hearty sympathy. I thought of Lady Brookes; the love and solicitude bestowed on her; her freedom from anxiety; her husband's ample estate, that made her life as delightful as existence can be made for a woman by money in the hands of a husband who lives mainly for her and her pleasure; and then I thought of this poor widow, newly snatched from a horrible peril, her husband drowned in her sight, and herself a beggar, as she had as good as hinted.

But sufficient for the day, thought I, is the evil

thereof. Let us first get out of this weather, and find out in what part of this corner of the Atlantic the yacht is before we vex our souls with other considerations.

CHAPTER II.

Sir Mordaunt was the first to quit the table. He apologized for leaving us, and went to his wife's cabin, saying, as he rose—

"If you are going on deck, Walton, I'll join you there presently."

On this I quitted my seat, too anxious to linger; and going to my cabin, put on my waterproof coat and returned. Miss Tuke stood at the foot of the companion steps, looking up at the darkness. She said to me, with a glance around at Mrs. Stretton and Norie, who remained at table, though the widow had followed me with her eyes as I passed along—"Mr. Walton," says she, in a low voice, "what makes you and Uncle Mordaunt so dull?"

"If your uncle is dull," said I, "and I don't know that he is, his wife's condition will answer your question about him. As for me, I am as cheerful as a man can be in a fog."

"No, no; you are dull too, Mr. Walton. Pray what is it? You can trust a sailor's daughter," says

she, coaxingly. "Nothing you can say will frighten me."

"I give you my word of honour there is nothing whatever the matter. There is a dense sea-fog around us; and as Purchase's calculations, and, maybe, the man himself, are not to be depended on, I am merely going to lend a hand on deck for a short while, to keep a look-out."

I saw she did not believe me, though I spoke the truth. She eyed me gravely and earnestly, and I was willing she should look as long as ever she pleased, for I, too, could look at her closely, with good excuse for so doing. Suddenly a little smile kindled in her pretty eyes, as she said softly—

"Well, Mr. Walton, join us here again as soon as you can. We are dull without you;" and she went back again to the dinner table.

To my sight, fresh from the sparkling cabin, the air seemed pitch dark. I stood at the companion for some moments, waiting for my eyes to get used to this profound blackness. I then saw the rays of the binnacle lamp striking into the thick mist like luminous gold wire. Anon I could faintly distinguish the outline of the bulwarks over against me on the other side, and a fragment of the mainmast where the haze from the skylight fell upon it. But that

was all. For the rest, as the French say, I might have had my eyes shut.

This being the second dog-watch, I knew Tripshore would be on deck, so I called his name.

"Here, sir," he answered, and came to my side.

"Have you kept the lead going?" I asked.

"Yes, sir," he replied, "but we get no bottom."

"And we want none, Tripshore. Have you seen anything of Purchase?"

"No, sir. His cabin door's to, and I allow he's turned in and asleep."

"The wind keeps steady," said I; "but so fresh as it is, I wonder it doesn't blow away this mist. The weather is thicker than it was. It's like smoke. I never remember the like of it," said I, facing to windward a moment, and then gladly turning my back on the blinding, penetrating drizzle.

"The men have grown anxious since Sir Mordaunt talked to 'em," said Tripshore, after a pause. "They're not used to weather o' this kind, and they've took it in their heads that Mr. Purchase is all out in his reckonings. His being in drink at a time like this is a bad job, sir."

"We can manage without him," said I.

"Why, yes, sir. It 'ud be a poor look-out if we couldn't."

"If the men," I continued, "were all of them

salt-water men like you, they'd find nothing to disturb them in the loss of such a skipper as Purchase. I feel as safe again with that drunken fellow under the deck for good."

"Oh, it isn't *him* the men mind," he exclaimed. "They reckon nobody aboard knows where we are, and they don't like that."

And small blame to them, thought I, but I said nothing.

"However, when the weather clears they'll brighten up with it, I daresay," he added.

"You will remember, Tripshore," said I, "that you had confidence enough in Purchase's reckoning to fancy that I was over uneasy when I told Sir Mordaunt that I should like to see the yacht on the starboard tack."

"You may be right, sir, though," said he, quickly.

"In my own mind," said I, "I am convinced that we are further to the westward than we know of. I may be wrong. It is because I can't be sure, that I don't insist upon heading away to the norrard."

"If you'll give the word, I'll put the yacht round at once," said he.

"Not without Sir Mordaunt's leave. He wants to fetch Kingston as soon as he can, and dislikes

the idea of turning tail upon it. When he comes on deck——"

But before I could finish my sentence he arrived. That is to say, he came up the steps, but stopped before he reached the top of them, and stood there like a man struck blind.

"My God!" he ejaculated, "what a night!"

I sung out cheerily, "Come along, Sir Mordaunt. It'll not be so black when your sight has lost the glare of the cabin."

"Oh, are you there, Walton?" he cried, and came on deck, but remained standing, as I had, in front of the companion.

"What a night!" he repeated. "It is not yet eight o'clock. Who is that near you?"

"Tripshore, sir," replied the mate.

"What sail is the vessel carrying?"

"Just what you left on her, sir—double-reefed mainsail, and outer and standing jibs. She's snug enough, and wants what she has if she's to ratch with the wind fore and aft her."

"Ay, and ratch she must," said I. "Tripshore is willing enough now, Sir Mordaunt, to see her on the starboard tack."

"But what's the good of going north, Walton," he answered, "when we are heading well to the east, and when we know from the chart that it

is all open sea that way as far as the coast of Africa?"

"Unless we have diminished our leeway——" said I.

"There's no change in that, sir," interrupted Tripshore.

"Our course as we go, therefore, is South East by South," said I. "Practically, then, we are steering a course parallel with the trend of the Bahama range. Nay, we are worse off even than that, for the trend of those islands is south-east. If we were certain of our whereabouts then we might find it safe enough to lie as we go. But in this weather, and without an atom of faith in Purchase's calculations, I'm for edging away to the norrard and eastward."

"Mr. Walton's right, sir," said Tripshore.

"Why, if you both think the yacht should be put about, let it be done," said Sir Mordaunt. "I'll not pit my wishes against your judgment."

The necessary orders were immediately given by Tripshore, whose eagerness was not a little flattering to me after the reception he had given my opinion some hours before. The helm was put up, to give the schooner plenty of way, and the brave little vessel, eased of her griping luff, began to *snore* through the water, whitening it all around until the

phosphorus and the foam of it threw out light enough to enable us clearly to see the whole figure of the hull, though within the rails all was as ebony, save where the skylight and the binnacle filled a space of the midnight blackness with a golden haze and shining lines.

The men had to get the yacht round by feeling. They knew where the running gear led, and groped about until they came to the places. When all was ready the helm was put down, and the flying schooner shot into the wind, her mainsail rattling like a roll of thunder, and the great main boom tearing at its hempen bonds like an elephant straining at a lasso. In a few minutes the head-sheets were flattened in, and I went to the compass and looked at it with a feeling of relief which I even then thought, and do still think unaccountable, considering that there was nothing but my distrust of Purchase to make me suppose our former course a perilous one.

Sir Mordaunt did not remain long on deck. I told him he could do no good by staying, that he merely risked his health by exposing himself to the malignant damp of this lukewarm, penetrating mist, and that I should not be long in following him.

And I was as good as my word. For after hanging about the deck for half an hour, the sight

of the rich, comfortable, bright cabin, as I saw it through the skylight, tempted me beyond resistance. I waited until another heave of the lead assured me that there was nothing to be felt at eighty fathoms, and then I went below.

I believe our going below and sitting in the cabin reassured Miss Tuke. Besides, I was cheerful enough now that I had had my way, and Sir Mordaunt was likewise heartier and brighter in manner, as though his mind took its posture from my behaviour. They say that coming events cast their shadows before; but I can answer for our little company aft that not for a fortnight past had we been in a calmer and pleasanter mood. Besides, there was good news from Lady Brookes' cabin. Her spirits had recovered something of their tone, the smoother passage of the vessel had briskened her up, and Sir Mordaunt said that if the weather was fine to-morrow he hoped to have her on deck.

We were all careful to keep our conversation away from topics likely to recall what we did not wish to remember—the death of the mastiff, the water-logged barque, the terrible gale we had been struggling with. We talked chiefly of England, how strange it was to be without newspapers, and not to know what had happened in the time we had been away.

"Yes," says Norie, "think of the mass of news that will have accumulated by the time we return. Most of it we shall never hear."

"All my dresses will have become old-fashioned," said Miss Tuke. "How do the ladies dress in the West Indies, Mrs. Stretton?"

"In the newest styles," she answered. "But I believe they look for their fashions to New Orleans and the American cities."

"Who import them from Paris," said Sir Mordaunt. "So, Ada, you'll not find yourself behind."

"But you'll give us no time for judging, Uncle Mordaunt," exclaimed Miss Tuke.

"Well, well, never mind about that now," said he. And then looking up at the compass, he turned to me and said, "Is this part of the Atlantic much frequented by vessels, Walton?"

"Not just hereabouts, I fancy. We're too far north for the West Indian steamers, and hardly in the track, I should say, for vessels bound to the Gulph."

"Pray let us talk of dress," exclaimed Norie. "We've been so fearfully nautical lately, that it's quite a relief to think of shops and shore matters. Mrs. Stretton, you were saying——" And here he jabbered about West India dress fashions, and so plied the poor woman with questions that presently we were all talking about dress.

In this way passed the evening, until Miss Tuke, looking at her watch, said it was ten o'clock, and that she would go to her aunt and then to bed. Mrs. Stretton and she then wished us good-night, and withdrew. Shortly afterwards Norie, who never showed any disposition to linger over the grog when Miss Tuke was gone, delivered himself of a loud yawn, shook hands, and went to his cabin. Sir Mordaunt lighted a cigar, I a pipe, and we sat for a while smoking in silence, listening to the stifled hissing of the water washing along the sides of the yacht, and to the straining of the bulkheads as the vessel rose and sank.

Presently, and without speaking, the baronet went to the foot of the companion steps and looked up.

"The night remains terribly dark," said he, coming back. "I had hoped to see a star. Surely such a fog as this must be very unusual here at this time of the year."

"You must be surprised at nothing that happens in the way of weather at sea," I replied. "I remember the master of a brig telling me that he once made a voyage from London to Barbadoes without meeting with the North-East Trades."

"This dreadful thickness makes one think of collisions, Walton."

"I suspected that was in your mind," said I,

"when you asked me that question about this part of the Atlantic being frequented by ships."

"But what do you think?" he inquired, nervously.

"I should not allow any fear of that kind to trouble me," I replied. "The odds are a thousand to one against a collision in a great sea like this."

"You always put a hearty face on those ideas," he said, relaxing. "No doubt you are right; but this last week has tried me severely. Purchase, too, has worried me greatly; and such is my mood at this moment, that I would gladly give five hundred pounds to be safe in harbour—at Kingston or anywhere else."

"I hoped you had recovered your spirits," said I, grieved by this breaking down in him. "You have been very cheerful for the last hour or two."

He filled a tumbler with brandy and water, and swallowed a draught, and then sat silent, uneasily combing down his beard with his fingers, and holding his extinguished cigar, which he looked at without relighting.

"Shall you go on deck again?"

I answered, "Yes, to have a last look round."

He glanced at the skylight, as if he had a mind to go too; but, guessing his intention, I advised him to keep below, to go to bed indeed. "The chances are," said I, "that when you wake the sky will be

blue, and the yacht buzzing merrily along under a bright sun to Jamaica."

"Ay," said he, "but do Tripshore and Burton know the course?"

"The schooner is in my hands," said I. "Only let the sun shine, and I'll engage that Tripshore and Burton con the vessel correctly. While this fog and this wind hold, we have nothing to do but to keep as we go."

He looked at me with a musing expression, and then, holding forth his hand, he said, "Very well, Walton; I'll obey your orders and go to bed. I commit our safety to you and Tripshore."

We shook hands cordially, and he went along the cabin, pausing, when under the skylight, to look up, and then closing the door softly after him.

I put on my waterproof coat and went on deck. It wanted twenty minutes to eleven. I thought the fog had thinned somewhat, and I crossed the deck to look to windward. Yet though the mist was undoubtedly less dense, gazing over the side was like staring at a black wall. The driving fog of fine rain made my eyes tingle, for the wind was strong, though so warm, that it felt like the gushing of air from the engine-room of a steamer. Nothing of the water was visible but the boiling foam churned up by the yacht's bows thickly interlaced with long fibres of

phosphorescent light. Sometimes, when a wave broke a short distance from the vessel, the flash of its foaming crest shone out through the mist, but nothing else of it was distinguishable.

Burton was in charge. I called to him, and told him that he must keep the schooner heading as she went. "Let her lie as close as she'll ratch," said I, "and shake it out of her. I would rather she crawled than ran, until the horizon clears. Those will be your instructions to Tripshore."

"Right, sir."

"How many men have you on the look-out?"

"Two, sir."

"Do your lights burn brightly?"

"I was forward just now, and they're as bright as the mist 'll let 'em be."

"Tell Tripshore to see to that, will you? and to keep a sharp look-out. I'd give a deal of money, Burton, to know within ten miles where we are. This fog is a bad job after our long westerly drift. Have you any notion of the currents hereabouts?"

"No, sir," he answered. "But we should be right as we go. I was looking at the chart along with Mr. Tripshore, and it shows northen but open water to the east'ards."

"I shall be up and down all night," said I. "I may take some rest upon one of the cabin lockers,

ready for a call. It may clear up suddenly, and you or Tripshore must have me up at the first sight of a star. Add that to your instructions, lest I forget to tell him."

We stood talking thus, and flitting about the deck, stopping now and again for five minutes at a time to look ahead into the pitch black void, straining our eyes against the needle-like rain, in the hope of catching sight of a flaw, to let us know that the mist was breaking, until eight bells—midnight—were struck. The men forward thumped the forehatch, and bawled to the watch below to rouse out. Tripshore came aft. We heard him calling, otherwise we should not have known he was on deck.

"Here!" answered Burton.

The mate, groping his way in the direction of the man's voice, walked up against me.

"Is this Burton?" says he, feeling me, as a blind man would.

"No," I answered; "he's to the left of me."

He begged my pardon, and said, "That scowbank of a steward's turned down the cabin lights. Had he let 'em be, the sheen of the skylight would have helped a man to see. It's like being smothered up in a blanket, Bill. I plumped agin the mainmast as I came along, and allow I've lifted a bump the size of a hen's egg over my right eye."

Burton repeated my instructions, and, after hanging about us a few minutes, wished me good-night and went below.

I was weary enough myself. A man usually is when he would rather not feel sleepy. The ten years I had spent away from the sea had robbed me of the old seasoning. The wet and the wind bothered and tried me. Nevertheless I remained on deck another hour, occasionally conversing with Tripshore, but for the main part hanging over the rail, first to windward, then to leeward, vainly striving to see a fathom beyond my nose, and watching—for the want of something to rest the sight upon and relieve it from the oppression of the heavy darkness—the pallid quivering of the rushing foam alongside, until the play of it, and the shooting and throbbing of the whirling fires in it, made my eyes reel.

Even if I had not been predisposed to lowness of spirits, this spell of loneliness, and the foul black weather, and the groaning and moaning of the invisible deep, with now and again the shriek of a block-sheave high aloft, and the hollow flap of the hidden canvas, and the numerous disturbing and startling sounds which were jerked out of the rigging and spars in the blackness overhead by the sharp jobbing and jumping of the schooner, were quite enough to depress me.

But at last my eyelids felt as if they were made of lead. Once, while looking over the lee rail, I found myself dropping asleep, and awoke with a kind of horror at the closeness of the hissing foam. I could resist the inclination to sleep no longer, and, calling to Tripshore, told him I was going to lie down in the cabin, and that he would find me on one of the lockers on the port side coming abreast of the companion steps.

I then went below, removed my water-proof coat, and putting a soft pillow on the locker, laid myself along, completely dressed, and ready to jump up at a moment's notice. The cabin lamps had been turned down, and yielded a very feeble light. I could have sworn I should drop asleep the moment my head touched the pillow; yet for at least twenty minutes did I lie, looking at the feeble lamps swinging to the motion of the vessel, and listening to the sounds in the cabin, and struggling to work out a kind of reckoning to myself, so that I might figure the yacht's position.

In the midst of this idle problemizing I fell into a deep slumber.

CHAPTER III.

I WAS awakened by a violent concussion. So heavy was the sleep from which I had been aroused, that I remained for a considerable space in a state of stupefaction. On my senses becoming active, I found myself sprawling on my back upon the cabin floor. I now supposed that I had been rolled off the locker by a heave of the vessel, and that the sensation of a strong concussion having taken place was due to my fall. I scrambled on to my feet, but scarcely was I upright when a terrible grinding and rending shock pitched me sideways on to the locker on which I had been lying. Men's voices were shouting overhead. I also heard the tramping of feet, the violent beating of canvas, above all, the roaring and rushing of water.

I sprang to the companion steps, and as I gained them there was another tearing shock—I know not how to describe it. To say that it was like the vessel going to pieces, will convey no image to your mind. Rather figure your sitting in a house, and one side of it sinking suddenly a foot or two, and every joist and strong fastening cracking and shrieking, and the roof and the whole structure trembling and groaning, as if the building must crash in. I stopped, struck to the very heart by the unbearable

and soul-sickening sensation. At that moment I was grasped from behind. I turned, and saw Sir Mordaunt, dressed only in his shirt and trousers.

"What has happened?" he cried.

"We have either been run into or we are ashore —the latter, I think," I answered. "For God's sake get the women dressed, and bring them into the cabin;" and, releasing myself from his clutch, I sprang on to the deck. As my head came level with the companion, the vessel heeled over—over—over yet! I crouched down, breathless and waiting, convinced that the yacht was going. I heard the men shrieking in the blackness as they fetched away with the angle of the decks, and fell helplessly into the lee scuppers.

When on her beam ends the schooner remained stationary. I knew by the bursting of the seas against her side, and by the fierce sounds of sweeping water over my head, that she had beaten round with her broadside to the sea, and so lay. At the top of my voice I shouted out the name of Tripshore, but it was like speaking when a gun explodes. The main sheet must have parted, for the sail I supposed lay fore and aft to the wind, and the slatting of it was like the crashing of thunder. The sea to leeward was as white as milk, and the noise of its boiling was alone enough to deafen a man.

Added to this, every sea that struck the weather side of the vessel boomed with a deep and hollow note, and was followed by a wild splashing and tearing of water upon the deck. Had I not kept the shelter of the companion when the vessel stopped at her sickening heel, I must have gone overboard, for a sea came pouring over the bulwarks that washed like an ocean of fire—so vivid was the phosphorus in it—as high as my waist, and tumbled down the steps in a cataract that was like to flood the cabin. I had sense enough to check this by closing the weather door and top of the companion, and there I stood, confounded, horrified, dulled, so that I was like an idiot, I may say, by the dreadful darkness, unable to see anything but the white water, and hearkening to the shrieks of the invisible men which rose with an edge that made the bellowing of the canvas and the thundering of the bursting surges a maddening and distracting uproar indeed.

Whilst I stood thus, some one in the blackness on the starboard hand cried out my name.

"Who is that?" I shouted.

"Me—Trispshore, sir. For the Lord's sake stretch along and give me hold of your hand. I'm drowning down here." I could not see him, but I was visible to him in the faint haze of light that came up out of the companion. Rejoiced to hear his voice, I

swung myself out on to the deck, and, grasping the companion with my left hand, I threw my legs wide apart and leaned down with my right arm outstretched.

"Do you see me?" I cried.

"Ay, sir—keep so a minute," he answered, and presently I felt him seize my hand.

Now that he was close I could perceive his outline, but not his face. The deck sloped like the side of a steep hill, it was slippery as ice with the wet, and cataracts of water were incessantly rushing down it from over the bulwarks. The poor fellow could give me no help, and I had to drag him up, which, by a desperate effort and putting forth my whole strength and will, I managed to accomplish, swinging him round into the companion, where he lay awhile on one knee, with his arm on the handrail and his head resting on his arm, quite spent and very nearly drowned.

All this while I heard no sounds in the cabin, and the men's voices on deck were stilled. The yacht lay dead on her side. Once only, and shortly after she had heeled over hard and fast aground, a sea raised and bumped her, and I heard the crash of timber aloft, and the sound of a mighty fall, but it was too dark to see what spar had gone; and after that the schooner lay quiet, with the sea break-

ing against her port side, and shooting high into the air over her, as was to be known by the rattling of the sheets of water when they fell into the boiling whiteness to leeward.

I said to Tripshore, "Have you your senses?"

"I'm better," he answered. "There's an ocean of water in the lee scuppers, and I was drowning in it. I feel full o' water. If I could be sick it 'ud relieve me."

"Where are the men?"

"Most of 'em drowned, I fear. Some of them have got away with the long boat."

"What time is it?"

"About half-past four."

"Oh, my God!" I cried. "If the daylight would only come, that we might see where we are!"

As I said this, I heard Sir Mordaunt calling my name. I went down the steps, and, turning round, found one of the cabin lamps brightly burning, and the whole party,—everybody who belonged to our end of the vessel,—standing at the table, which alone prevented them from slipping down the cabin floor. Sir Mordaunt grasped his wife round the waist with his right arm, and with the other held Miss Tuke by the wrist. Mrs. Stretton and Carey clung to each other, and Norie stood beside them. Full of hurrying horror as that time was, I could yet

find a moment to wonder at the supernatural calmness of Lady Brookes. She was as white as marble, but I could not question that she had her senses; and though she may not have known that at any instant the yacht might crumble to pieces under our feet, yet she surely comprehended that our peril was of the direst kind, that we were shipwrecked, lying broken and storm-swept upon some nameless reef, amid the blackness of a howling night.

Both Mrs. Stretton's and Miss Tuke's faces wore rather an expression of consternation than horror. Now and then Carey uttered a low moan—every time the water thundered on the deck she made that noise—otherwise no sound came from the women. Their silence indeed was almost shocking to me. In Lady Brookes I should have foretold a behaviour so different, so distracting, that her rigid posture and stony face smote me like a prophecy of immediate death. It seemed to take all hope of life away, as if the bitterness of death had passed from her and the others, and they were waiting to die.

"What has happened, Walton?" said the baronet, in a strong thick voice.

"The yacht is on her beam-ends ashore," I replied. "Purchase's reckoning is diabolically wrong. I always feared so—yet I had hoped to escape this."

"What are we to do?" he said.

When he said this they all fixed their eyes upon me, with a dreadful eagerness in their expression—heart-moving beyond endurance, indeed, owing to their silence. I gulped down a sob, and struggling to master my voice, I answered, "We can do nothing until daylight comes. It draws on for five o'clock, and we shall have the dawn shortly. Let us pray God that the vessel will hold together—I think she will. She is strong, and can stand this buffeting unless she bumps."

"She is motionless," exclaimed Norie, in a broken voice. "I have not felt her bump for some time."

"Is there no way of finding out where we are?" cried Miss Tuke, wildly and suddenly. "Can we not get help from the shore?"

"It is as black as ink on deck," I replied. "There are no lights—there is no land to be seen."

"Oh, the water—the water! Listen to it!" shrieked Carey, cowering, and looking around her with eyes brilliant with terror.

A heavy sea had broken over the vessel and poured over the deck above us, and a bright flood came bursting and smoking down the companion ladder.

Lady Brookes threw her arms up, and Sir Mor-

daunt pressed her fiercely to him; but she remained as silent as a statue.

I called to Tripshore to close the companion and come down. I reckoned that if any of the crew were alive they would be in the forecastle. Be that as it was, we could not let the cabin be drowned. Already the water was as high as the starboard lockers, and the cabin was small enough to be quickly flooded.

Tripshore descended with a faltering motion. No one but myself had known he was on top of the steps. His clothes were streaming, his sou'-wester had been washed off his head, and his hair was pasted on his forehead, throwing out his bleached face, and making him look more like a corpse than a man. There stood a decanter of brandy on one of the swinging trays, and with the utmost difficulty I managed to seize it and give it to Tripshore, bidding him put his lips to it and swallow a dram. In truth, numbed and confounded as my mind was by the sudden horror of our condition, I yet preserved sufficient presence of mind to foresee a vital value in this sailor if the wreck held together until the daylight, and that our lives might depend upon my recovering him from his half-drowned state.

I gathered hope when I found the yacht lying immovable. That she was bilged, I knew by the

slow rise of the water to leeward in the cabin; but, as I say, the rise was slow, and much of the water that was there had come down the companion; and I guessed if the leak did not drain in faster than it now did, it would be a good bit past daylight before the water came high enough to drive us out of the cabin.*

The worst and most dreadful part was the heavy concussions of the seas which struck the windward side of the schooner, and kept her trembling like a railway carriage swiftly drawn. After every blow there would be a pause, and then down would come the water in tons weight, smashing upon the deck overhead, and washing in a loud roar over the bulwarks on the other side. Every instant I expected to see the companion carry away, or the skylight dashed in. But, mercifully for us, these fixtures stood, so nobly and stoutly built was that vessel down to the meanest of her appointments.

What our position was at this time I will leave you to imagine. The heel of the yacht was certainly not less than fifty, ay, and may be, more than fifty, degrees. The swinging trays lay with their lee rims hard against the upper deck. So acute was the slope, that nothing but the interposition of the table

* The hold was full of water, and the draining into the cabin was no doubt through the cabin floor.

prevented us from falling headlong down the incline. In the light of the lamp we stood looking at one another, all in silence, save but for the occasional screams or moans of alarm which broke from Carey, and once or twice from Miss Tuke, though never from Lady Brookes, when a wave beat upon the deck, and ran snarling and hissing away, like a score of disappointed wild beasts. I shall never forget the expression of anguish in Sir Mordaunt's face. I can recall no hint of fear in it. It was bitter grief and horror, as if *he* were to blame for the frightful peril that with amazing swiftnesss had confronted the motionless, staring woman he clutched to his heart.

As for *her*, her passivity was as though a miracle had been wrought. I thanked God for it, for I knew how the agony of that time would have been heightened by her screams and terror. Yet it was wonderful that she, whom a thunderstorm had driven into hysterics, and who had fainted over the narrative of a disaster, should be standing there now as if all sensibility had fallen dead in her. Perhaps, indeed, this may have been the case. Her aspect was one of petrifaction, or, it might be that her senses were paralyzed by the first alarm, and were unable to take in the full meaning of our situation. She often turned her glittering eyes on me,

and stared as though she beheld an apparition. It was a positive relief to see her toss her hands when the water above boomed thunderously. Suddenly Tripshore made a movement.

"Where are you going?" I asked, sharply.

"To see if anything can be done for our lives," he answered.

"Stay where you are!" I cried. "If you show your head above the companion you'll be washed overboard; and I won't have the doors opened. When the dawn comes you'll see it on that skylight. What *can* be done now, man? It's pitch dark still. Could we see to launch a boat? Would those breaking seas allow us to enter a boat? Stay where you are, I say. Here, at least, we have a refuge."

"Can nothing be done?" exclaimed Miss Tuke, with a dreadful note of despair in her voice.

"Yes, yes," I answered. "Everything that can be done *shall* be done. But it will be madness to leave this cabin until the dawn comes, to let us know where we are and what we can do."

"Have you no rockets to send up?" cried Mrs. Stretton.

"They'll be drowned by this time, sir," said Tripshore, addressing me. "They're in the fore peak. There'll be no getting at 'em."

"They would not help us," I said. "They would

not show in this mist; though could we come at them we might fire them through the companion."

"I'll try and get 'em, if you like," said Tripshore; "but unless yon bulkhead can be broke through, I shall have to go on deck to get down the fore hatch."

"No, don't risk that," exclaimed Sir Mordaunt. "The dawn will be here soon. Mr. Walton is right; we can do nothing in this blackness."

Nothing; nor did I regret the want of the rockets, for from the first I never doubted that we were aground upon one of the Bahama shoals, miles out of sight of inhabited land, and that there was no eye but God's to behold our signal of distress, though we should make a blaze as big as a burning city.

The steady posture of the yacht, and my confidence in her strength, kept my heart up; and I endeavoured to cheer my companions by pointing out that the wind might drop with the rising sun, and that, though we had lost two boats, we had another large enough to contain us all. Likewise, that we need not doubt of being able to make our way to one of the numerous islands which lay scattered broadcast upon these seas, where we should get the relief we stood in need of.

Sir Mordaunt asked Tripshore where the rest of

the crew were. The man answered that he feared some of them were drowned, but he could not say for certain: he supposed those who lived were sheltering themselves in the forecastle.

I was sorry he answered the question in that way. His reply was a dreadful shock to the women. His saying that he feared some of the men were drowned gave a most crushing sense of realness to our awful situation. Miss Tuke's face contracted as with an agonizing spasm, and Mrs. Stretton cried bitterly. Lady Brookes said something to her husband—I did not catch the words—and he laid her head against his shoulder, and soothed her with the most endearing gestures, at the same time looking at me with a heart-broken expression in his eyes.

In this manner we stood waiting to see the dawn brighten upon the skylight windows, listening with terror to the weary crashing of the seas, feeling with unspeakable dismay the dreadful occasional quivering of the hull, and I at least scarcely daring to hope that the vessel could much longer withstand the cruel hammering of those pounding surges.

CHAPTER IV.

THE light seemed a long while coming, but at last the dawn stood upon the skylight glass. Miss

Tuke was the first to notice it. She cried out, "The morning has broken, Mr. Walton," and pointed to the skylight.

I immediately clawed my way along to the steps, and ascended them, followed by Tripshore. I opened the starboard companion door cautiously, and peered forth. The fog was all gone and the air clear, but the sky very cloudy. The light was but a glimmering grey as yet, but it broadened and sharpened quickly whilst I stood gazing, and then the whole wild picture of ruin and desolation was clear before me.

The yacht lay with her bows very high in the air, and her stern correspondingly deep, and hence it was that all the seas which struck rolled their volumes over the quarter-deck, leaving the forecastle comparatively free; that is to say, the falls of water there were much less frequent than they were aft, and a great deal less weighty and dangerous. A short distance away on the starboard beam trended a low line of dark shore, the full extent of which I could compass with the eye. It was indeed, as I immediately perceived, a low, flat island, with a little space of rising land down in the east quarter of it. Between the yacht and the near beach was a tract of white water, that boiled and leaped in pinnacles and spears, as you may see water play on shoals. It was like milk for the whiteness, and was

raging a long way both ahead and astern of the schooner, whose starboard bulwarks lay over into it, and it constantly washed in a heavy smother of froth over the rail in such a manner, that had the heel of the yacht been less sharp, the whole deck from the forehatch would have been under water. As it was, the flood stood as high as the bulwark rail, and extended as far inboard as the companion in which I stood, and in this lake of water, that was constantly being lashed into fury by the torrents pouring over the weather side, lay four drowned men, one of whom was Purchase. The foremast was gone about ten feet above the deck, and the wreck of it lay over the side. Every movable article had been swept overboard. The boat we carried amidships had disappeared, and the boat that hung at the davits had been broken in halves by a blow from a sea.

This is but a cold description. But, my God! with what agony of soul did I contemplate this dreadful scene of ruin, the drowned bodies, the horrible white water utterly cutting us off from the land, and, above all, the stormy look of the sky, that threatened a gale of wind!

Sir Mordaunt had left the women and crawled up the companion steps, but being unable to see, owing to Tripshore and me blocking the companion,

he asked me if I could perceive land, and what our position was. I was too affected to answer him, and motioned Tripshore to descend a few steps, so as to give the baronet room to see for himself. The moment Sir Mordaunt looked at the deck and the land he uttered a bitter cry and reeled backwards, and had I not thrown my arm round his neck he would have fallen to the bottom of the steps. The sight of those drowned men, his wrecked and broken yacht, and the boiling water that cut us off from the shore, nearly drove him crazy.

But whilst I was supporting him, my eye lighted on the figure of a man standing on the beach, as close to the water as the heavy breakers would permit. He flourished his hand and shouted to us, but though I could hear his voice very faintly, his words were absolutely indistinguishable.

"Look!" I cried. "If that island is not inhabited, then yonder must be one of our men. For God's sake, Sir Mordaunt, pluck up your heart and help me to think how to act. Tripshore, come on deck! There's one of our crew ashore."

To make room for him I got upon deck, and squatted to leeward of the companion, to shelter myself from the flying water.

"It's Bill Burton, I believe, or Tom Hunter—one or the other," exclaimed Tripshore. "Oh, Lord! if

we could only chuck him the end of a line, he'd be able to drag us ashore."

This, maybe, was the one hint I needed to set my mind struggling. The look of the sky was a clear intimation that there must presently come such a sea as would break up and scatter the schooner, as her boats were already scattered. I sprang to my feet, and, watching my chance, crawled to the weather bulwarks, and crept along on my hands and knees until I came to the forecastle, where, as I have said, the water was not flying heavily. This did not bring me closer to the man ashore, but I could stand erect here without great peril of being swept overboard, providing I held on tightly, and so could make him see me.

He saw me the moment I stood up, as I perceived by the manner in which he hallooed and flourished his arms. At the top of my voice I shouted to him, "Can you hear me?"

The wind blew my voice to him, and he immediately made an affirmative gesture.

"If we can manage to send you the end of a line, look out for it, and make the end fast," I bawled.

He again raised his hand.

By this time Tripshore had joined me, and, looking towards the companion, I perceived Sir Mordaunt and his wife and Norie on the steps, watching us.

"Tripshore," I cried, "we must get a rope's end ashore somehow. How is it to be done?"

We stood staring about us in a torture of perplexity.

"If we made a line fast to the half of that boat," I said, pointing to the broken boat at the davits, "would the wind drift it ashore, think you?"

"Ay, sir, it might—it might! Stop!" he shouted. "I have it! Where's the dog?"

"Yes!" I cried, the full significance of his meaning flashing upon me before the words had died on his lips. "If the beast be living he may save our lives!"

I ran my eyes eagerly over the decks, but the sea had torn up every fixture with the exception of the companion and skylights, and there was not a corner where the dog could have lain hid.

"Have you seen your dog?" I cried to Sir Mordaunt; but at that moment a heavy sea washed over the after part of the deck, and some shrieks from the women told me that a quantity of water had filled the companion, driving down Sir Mordaunt and the others.

"If you'll look for the dog in the fo'ksle, I'll seek him in the cabin," exclaimed Tripshore. "Pray the Lord he's not overboard!" And as he said this

he dropped on his knees and crept along under the bulwarks.

The forecastle was open. I threw my legs over, and feeling the ladder with my feet briskly descended. But the forecastle was half full of water, and it was up to my waist when my head was on a level with the upper deck. It was wonderful that the bulkhead that separated the forecastle from the after part of the vessel stood the weight: had it given, the cabin would have been drowned at once. I knew that nothing could be alive here. I peered and peered, to see if there was any one in the upper bunks, but nothing was to be seen but the water and some soaked bedclothes hanging over the edges of the upper bunks. Whatever else was there lay at the bottom, under water and out of sight.

This choking and gurgling and dark forecastle so sickened my heart, that I stood holding on to the ladder, and looking with helpless horror like a man malignantly fascinated. But a sudden twitch of the vessel shocked me into my senses again, and I scrambled on deck, so persuaded that our end was at hand, that in the torment of my mind I could have flung myself overboard, so much crueller than death was this anguish of expecting it. I was scarcely on the forecastle, however, when fresh life was given me by the sight of Tripshore approaching with the

dog. He had the animal by the flesh of the neck, and came along like an animal himself, that is to say, on his knees and left hand. The water flew in sheets over him, but he escaped the terrible falls by keeping close under the bulwarks, and presently he was at my side with the dog, eagerly telling me that he had found him behind the arms-rack in the cabin.

I immediately pulled out my knife and cut away some of the thin running gear which lay across the deck: they were top-gallant sheets and jib-halliards, long and light. I knotted them and other pieces of stuff together until I calculated they made a length of over sixty fathoms. I hitched one end over the dog's neck, taking care that the animal should have plenty of freedom, and yet the hitch should not slip over his head either. He was streaming with water, and seemed to understand our peril. I patted and stroked and soothed him as best I could, pointing to the land, and bidding him swim to it, just as I would have talked to a man. The creature looked at me and whined. I patted him again, and then Tripshore helped me to raise him, and we carried him to the submerged side of the hull, walking up to our armpits in water, and there we flung him overboard into the whirl of froth. He sunk in the foam, and I believed that the weight of the wet

rope had dragged him down; but presently his head came up a little distance away from the yacht. He turned, and tried to regain the vessel. I shouted and pointed to the land, gesticulating furiously in that direction, as did Tripshore, both of us menacing him with our fists to drive him shorewards, and standing with the water nearly up to our throats as I have said, but happily without danger from the toppling white seas to leeward, in consequence of the yacht's bows being hove high, and her hull sheltering the water just under her there.

For about a minute—to me an eternity—the dog swam round and round, and I was in the greatest terror lest the line, which I had given plenty of scope to, should foul his legs. He rose and sank upon the seas, swimming very well, and the foam blowing like drifts of snow over him. At last a sea lifted him high, with his eyes to the land, and from that moment he began steadily to make for it.

Seeing this, I told Tripshore to shout to the man on the beach to look out for the dog. The animal had a large head, and it was impossible for the man to miss seeing him. As the dog swam, I carefully threw fake after fake of line overboard, giving abundance of slack, that the animal might be as little hampered as possible. The set of the tide—which I knew to be rising by feeling the

twitching of the vessel—carried the dog somewhat to the eastward; but the strong wind blowing in a contrary direction greatly diminished the influence of the tide upon the brave brute, and with a transport of delight I beheld him slowly but surely approach the land, whilst the man on the beach encouraged him by smacking his knee and waving his arm.

In about ten minutes after having been thrown overboard, the dog was among the breakers. Had he been a man swimming for his life, this would have been the most desperate part of the undertaking. But I did not fear for the dog. I knew his great muscular power, and that his long narrow body would not be greatly affected by the recoil of the breakers. And I was right; for presently I saw him flung up on top of a running sea, and as it broke upon the beach the dog sprang out of the foam and ran to the man, and lay down at his feet.

I now told Tripshore to look about him and select the stoutest rope he could find and bend it on to the line, and tell the man to haul it ashore. He guessed my scheme, as, indeed, any sailor would, and fell to work with great energy and smartness. Whilst he cleared away the biggest rope he could come at, I crept along under the bulwarks, and, watching my opportunity, made a dash for the com-

panion and swung myself into it before the sea could strike me.

The water was rising in the cabin fast, and in the lee side it lay like a lake. Sir Mordaunt and the others stood at the foot of the steps. I told them that the forecastle was the safest place now, that very little water was coming over there, that the dog had reached the shore with the line, and that under God's providence I was sure we should be able to save our lives.

"But you must come along to the forecastle at once," said I. "The tide is rising, and the wind is increasing, and you may feel the vessel stirring with every blow. Sir Mordaunt, I will take your wife and Carey. You will take your niece. Norie will bring Mrs. Stretton."

So saying, I took Lady Brookes' hand and helped her up the steps, calling to Carey to fellow. I left them standing in the companion whilst I crawled up the deck to a belaying pin that was just abreast of the hatch, over which I hitched a rope, so that the end came to the companion. With this we should be able to drag ourselves up under the shelter of the bulwarks. How full of peril this job of getting up those decks to the bulwarks was I hardly know how to express; for it is impossible in words to put before you the picture of those slippery

inclined planks, and the incessant gushing and high leaping of solid bodies of green water over the after portion of the devoted hull, so that the foaming of the seas over the bulwarks as much resembled a river flooding a dam, and tumbling in a sheet of froth into a lower reach, as anything I can liken it to. Yet, owing to the acute inclination of the hull, the bulwarks so overhung the deck that the pouring water left a clear space immediately under them. To reach this clear space was now our business. I grasped Lady Brookes firmly around the waist, and seized the rope, but found I had not the strength to drag our united weight up by one hand. A sharp wrench of the vessel, accompanied by the grinding and cracking sounds of breaking timber, struck through me like a wound in the side. I shouted to Tripshore to come and help me, whereupon he dropped the rope that he was clearing away from the raffle, and crawled aft. I told him to station himself at the belaying pin and haul the women up as I made them fast. Indeed, there was no other way of managing that business. I passed the end of the rope round Lady Brookes' waist, and bidding her have no fear, launched her up the deck as far as my arms could thrust her, and Tripshore hauled her up alongside of him, and so got her under the bulwark.

In this fashion we placed the other women under that shelter, though a sea dashed Carey down and nearly drowned her as Tripshore was dragging her up; and then telling the baronet and Norie to imitate my behaviour, I pulled myself up the deck, and with Tripshore's assistance got the women forward, where we were joined by Sir Mordaunt and the doctor.

It was now very evident, from the increasing oscillation of the yacht and the grinding of her bottom upon the reef, that the tide was making fast. There was great weight in the wind, too, and I knew that the seas would grow bigger with the flood. I told my companions to hold fast to the ringbolts and cleats, or whatever else their hands could come at, and squat low out of the way of the rushing and shooting waters, and then fell to work with Tripshore to clear away the rope I wanted to stretch to the shore.

As well as my eye could measure the distance, the beach was about fifty fathoms away. All between was the broken, white water, in which no boat could have lived an instant, even had we had a boat to launch. Apparently the reef we had struck on was a shelf that would be dry in smooth water at low tide. The yacht had struck it bow on and run

up it, then swung broadside round, leaving the forepart of her high.

The instant we had manufactured a warp we bent the end of it on to the shore line, and signalled to the man to haul in. This he did, and when the end came to his hand I bawled to him to make it securely fast. There were some dwarf trees a short distance up the beach, and he carried the end of the warp to one of them and secured it. Could I have seen any handspikes lying about, I should have carried our end of the warp to the forecastle capstan and got a strain upon it; but not being able to use the capstan, all of us men tailed on to the rope, and with our united weight tautened it considerably.

"Now, Tripshore," said I, "I shall rig up a sliding bowline-on-the-bite on this rope, but it'll want two hauling lines—one to drag the bowline ashore, and the other to drag it back again. Can you reach the land by that warp?"

He looked at it and said, "Yes, sir."

"If you don't feel strong enough for the job, don't attempt it. I'll try. But if you have the strength, you'll be the likelier man."

"I'll do it," he repeated, and pulled off his coat.

With feverish haste I cleared away the deep-sea lead-line and hitched the end round his waist;

and in a moment he went over the bows, laid hold of the warp, and travelled along it hand over fist. It wanted a real sailor with a lion's heart in him to adventure such an exploit—a man used to hanging on by his eyelids, and with fingers like fish-hooks. The rope curved into a bight under his weight, and the white seas leaped and snapped at his feet, and sometimes buried him in foam as high as his waist. I watched him without a wink of the eye. Recalling my thoughts at that time, I may realize now the frightful intensity of my stare. I hardly seemed to breathe. Quite mechanically I let the lead-line slip overboard, as, foot by foot, he went along, making the warp jump with his jerks as one hand passed the other. One hundred yards seem but a short span; yet it made a fearfully long journey for that heroic man, and nothing but a brain of iron could have endured the sight of the furious, broken, tumbling water below. I say honestly, such was the condition of my nerves, that I do not doubt, had I been in Tripshore's place, I should have let go, through inability to stand the sight of the giddy, sickening spectacle of whirling, flashing, torrent-like play of foaming waters over which he was passing.

Foot by foot he went along the rope. When near the breakers he paused, and my heart seemed to stop beating. Half his body—nay, the whole,

indeed—would be swept by those rushing and shattering acclivities, and this appeared to be in his mind, or perhaps he was taking breath for the dreadful encounter. He began to move again. Nine or ten times did his hands pass and repass each other, and then a tall breaker took him and swept him right along the warp. It passed, and he swung back like a pendulum, and again proceeded. But the recoil of the same sea hove him along the warp again, and again he swung heavily. I prayed aloud to God to give him strength. Thrice was he beaten in that manner, and each time left him swinging nearer the shore. The fourth time he let go, and vanished in the send of a breaker as it swelled in fury up the beach. The man who had been standing watching him darted towards the spot where he had disappeared, and plunged up to his middle in the water. Immediately after the form of Tripshore emerged, and both men ran up the beach.

Sir Mordaunt had watched this noble struggle as well as I, but Norie and the women sat crouched under the bulwarks, resembling bundles of clothes, never once uttering a sound. Indeed, Lady Brookes kept her eyes closed, and her arms hanging inertly down, and her white face made her look dead.

When I saw that Tripshore was safe, I seized a

piece of stout rope and knotted it into the bowline that is used at sea for slinging men. This done, I hitched it with a large eye upon the warp, so that it should slide easily, and attached the end of the leadline that Tripshore had carried ashore with him to it. I also bent on to it a similar line, the end of which was to be retained on board; and all this being accomplished with the mad headlong haste that a man will make who works for his life, I went to Lady Brookes and took her arm, and speaking of the bowline as a noose, that she might understand me, I told her to make haste and get into it, that Tripshore and the other man might pull her ashore.

She opened her eyes and got up, being, indeed, compelled to rise by the force I was obliged to exert; but when she saw what she was to do, she uttered a terrific shriek, and fell towards her husband and clung to him.

I saw a dreadful difficulty here, and something to cruelly heighten the horrors of our position. But the yacht was beginning to bump heavily, and the seas which washed the after part of her in floods were threatening to sweep the forecastle.

"If her life is to be saved, she *must* do it!" I shouted to Sir Mordaunt. "The vessel is breaking up. If there is any delay we must all perish. For

God's sake, for all our sakes, shut your ears to her cries, and help me to get her into that sling."

Made desperate by the peril of delay, I grasped the poor woman as I said this, but though the baronet did his best to assist me, he seemed crushed, broken down, without strength; and never shall I forget his face as I dragged his shrieking wife into the bows of the yacht, nor my own shame and horror of soul at the violence I was forced to exert.

She was as strong as a man. She wrestled with me, she got her hand in my hair, and most assuredly she would have overpowered me, as I was scarce able to keep my footing on the deck, had not Norie come to my help. He grasped her hands from behind, another drag brought her close to the bowline, I slipped it under her arms, and then seizing her by the waist, I lifted her bodily over the bows of the yacht, and left her dangling upon the warp.

I was nearly spent with this dreadful struggle, but yet found voice enough to shout to the men to haul in steadily and quickly. Indeed, there was no great danger. She had only to hold her mouth closed when she neared the breakers, and keep quiet, and let the men drag her. But it was impossible to give her any directions. Her screams were fright-

ful. Hardly had the bowline been dragged a dozen feet, when she caught hold of the warp, and prevented the men from hauling her. I yelled to her to let go, but my cries were only answered by her piercing shrieks.

"What is to be done?" I exclaimed to Sir Mordaunt, as the yacht thumped heavily on the reef, followed by a loud crash and splintering of wood.

"See—she has let go! Her head has fallen on one side! Oh, great God, has the fright killed her?" he cried.

I roared to the men to drag her along quickly. The warp was slippery with the wet, and the bowline travelled like a cringle upon a greased line. Twice the breakers buried the poor creature, and then they got her ashore and threw off the bowline, which I hastily hauled aboard.

I now called to Miss Tuke, and she got up without a word, her face of a shocking whiteness, her lips so tightly compressed that they were no more than an ashen line, but with a fine gleam of resolution in her eyes.

"Have no fear," I exclaimed. "Keep your mouth shut. The wash of the breakers won't hurt you then."

I passed the bowline under her arms, helped

her over the bows, gave the signal to the men, and she was dragged along the warp, mute as a statue. The landing of such heroines as this was no labour. They had her ashore in less than two minutes, and though she had passed through one heavy sea, yet the moment she touched the land she waved her hand to us, and then dropped on her knees beside the prostrate and motionless figure of her aunt.

Her fine example heartened Mrs. Stretton, who was ready for the bowline before I had dragged it aboard. She threw it over her head quickly, got over the bow without help, and was presently safe on the beach.

But when it came to Carey's turn the poor girl shrieked out, and shrunk back in an agony of terror. I had so great a horror of forcing her, after my dreadful struggle with Lady Brookes, that I cried to Sir Mordaunt, "Let it be your turn, then. It will comfort your wife to have you. I will reason with Carey, and when you are gone she may follow quietly."

He knew as well as I that there was no time to be wasted, and I believe he, too, dreaded the spectacle of Carey's terror and the sound of her cries. I helped him over the bows, and whilst the men hauled him along, I seized the girl's hand and bade her mark how easy it was, how free from

danger; and was thus speaking to her as tenderly and encouragingly as the state of mind I was then in would permit, when a great sea struck the yacht right amidships, and spreading like a gigantic fan, poured in a vast overwhelming deluge clean over the vessel. Nothing could have resisted that tremendous and crushing Niagara of a sea. In an instant I felt myself carried away by a force so astounding that temporarily it killed every instinct of life in me, and I don't remember that I made the least exertion to save myself, no, not by so much as extending my arms. But in the midst of the thunder of the enormous surge I could distinctly hear the rending and crashing of the yacht's hull, and knew by the sounds, as though I had seen the fabric demolished, that the schooner had gone to pieces.

When I rose to the surface of the water I found myself among a quantity of fragments of floating timber, one piece of which I seized. The waves were heights of creaming foam, and I seemed to rise and fall upon a surface of heaving, leaping, and wildly-blown snow. Being run up by a wave, I saw about a stone's throw distant the figure of Norie clasping a short spar, and quite close to me was Carey, clinging to a fragment of one of the yacht's ribs. I waited until the next sea hove me

up, and then shouted to her to hold tight, and that I would endeavour to get to her; and seizing a lighter piece of wood than I had first grasped, I pointed my face towards her and struck out with my feet, exerting all my strength. The tide took me her way, and meanwhile I was able to stem the current by help of the wind and by violently moving my legs. At last a sea swung the piece of timber to which she clung close to me, on which I grasped her arm, and seeing that the fragment that sustained her would support us both, I let go my piece of wreck and grabbed with my left hand at hers. I cried in her ear, with the hope of keeping her poor heart up, that the land was close, and that there was no fear of her sinking if she kept a good hold. Had I been alone, I cannot flatter myself that I should have exhibited anything like the spirit that was animating me now. I might have held on with a dogged madness for life, but I dare say no more than my animal instincts would have operated. The need of this helpless woman surprisingly stimulated me. She created in me, I will say, a high and honest courage. I took her by the waist, and with a jerk planted her upon the piece of timber, so that the swell of her breast stayed her, and lifted her head well above the water. The whirl of the seas swayed us round and round;

sometimes our faces looked towards the land, and sometimes towards the reef where the yacht had gone to pieces, and where the water was boiling with a frightful sound. Whenever we confronted the beach I struck out with my legs. My dread, my fearful expectation was that the tide, as it gained in force, would run us out to sea, in which case there would be no hope for us; but after we had been tossing in the water for upwards of a quarter of an hour, I saw from the height of a tall sea that we were steadily nearing the beach, upon which stood the people who had been saved, and I then perceived that the wind blowing with violence against the tide tended to drift us landward, whilst every sea that ran also helped us forward.

I could see nothing of Norie, and supposed he was drowned. The wind, as I had anticipated from the appearance of the sky, had risen into a gale, and the foam flew along the water like sheets of steam; and whenever the combers whirled us with our faces to the blast, we had like to have lost our sight as well as have been suffocated by the fury with which the pitiless spray poured against us. As minute after minute went by, the agony of that struggle grew greater and greater. I do not mean that I found my strength failing me, or that my poor companion relaxed her deathlike embrace of

the piece of timber that floated us. It was the wild and dashing tossing of the sea; the hissing and deafening seething and crackling of spume in our ears; the rush of foam over our heads when the crest of a wave broke after we had been hove to its summit; the appalling feeling of littleness and helplessness inspired by those mad white waters, and the insignificance of the strength we possessed to oppose to them—it was these things which made that struggle the great agony it became.

But in consequence of our steady approach to the land, my spirits never utterly sank. Whenever it was in my power to do so, I called to my companion to keep up her courage, that our sufferings would soon be over; until at last we found ourselves among the breakers. I threw myself upon the woman's back, with my hands grasping the timber on either side her arms, so that my weight might keep her body pressed to the spar; and scarcely was I so planted when a roaring sea took us and ran us towards the beach at the rate of an express train. It completely buried us, and I felt myself flying round and round in it like a wheel, frenziedly grasping the timber and feeling the woman's body under me. Oh, the sickening, swooning, deathlike sensation of that rush! the thunder of the water in the ears! the choking, suffocating, bursting feeling

in the head and breast! It hurled us upon the beach, and flung us there with such violence that I let go, unable to keep my fists clenched. I was seized by the hair, but in an instant wrenched away and torn back into the coiling arch of the next breaker, which rolled shatteringly over me with a sound as though the earth were splitting in halves; and then I suppose my senses left me, for I have no further memory of struggling in the water.

CHAPTER V.

When I recovered I found myself on my back. My senses were active at once, and I had no difficulty in recollecting what had befallen us. I sat upright, and pressing my hands to my eyes, so as to clear my sight, I looked about me.

Some twenty paces away was assembled a small group of persons. These people consisted of Miss Tuke and Mrs. Stretton, both of whom crouched over the body of Carey, and were chafing her hands, supporting her head, and the like; and near them Norie, wringing out his coat. I was amazed to see him alive. A little beyond sat Sir Mordaunt, with his face bowed down to his knees and buried in his hands, and his back turned upon a recumbent figure, the head of which was hidden by a man's

jacket. The man whom we had noticed on the beach when the dawn broke, and whom I now recognized as one of the crew named Tom Hunter, was down near the breakers, shading his eyes, and intently gazing towards the sea.

I took the scene in at a glance, and was beginning to count the people, to see how many we were in all, when Tripshore stepped round from behind me.

"I thought you wasn't drowned, sir," said he. "You didn't look like a drowned man. There was no good going on chafing of you. How do you feel yourself, sir?"

"I can't tell you yet, Tripshore," I answered. "Is the poor girl I came ashore with alive?"

"I don't know, sir. I've been looking at the ladies rubbing her. I think they'll pull her through."

"And Lady Brookes?" said I.

"Ah, she's dead, sir. She was dead afore Tom and I could haul her through the breakers."

I asked him to give me his hand, and then struggled on to my feet. My limbs were sound, and I suffered from no other inconvenience than a feeling of faintness and giddiness. No one noticed me until I was close to the group, and then Miss Tuke, seeing me, uttered a cry, started to her feet, and grasped my hand. Sir Mordaunt must have heard

her, but he did not raise his head nor shift his posture.

"Thank God you are spared!" cried the girl, speaking wildly, like a delirious person.

"Are these all of us?" I said, motioning with my hand.

"These are all—and my aunt is dead! Oh, Mr. Walton, my aunt is dead!" she exclaimed.

I could make no reply. Mrs. Stretton put out her hand for mine. I gave it to her, and she pressed it. She could not rise, because Carey's head lay on her lap, but the poor maid was alive, and followed me with her eyes, though she could not move for exhaustion.

I stepped over to Lady Brookes' body, and lifted the jacket. It was not necessary to look twice at her face to know that she was dead. Her features were very calm; death was in every line; her eyes were open, and the expression they gave the face was like a command to keep it covered.

As I replaced the jacket softly, Sir Mordaunt turned his head. His face was dreadfully hollow, his complexion ashen, he was without coat or hat, and the strong wind having dried his hair, was blowing it wildly upon his head. His clothes were streaming wet—as, for that matter, were mine and the others'. He gazed at me for a while like a

man struggling with his mind. Then said he, "Walton, my wife is dead. I brought her from home to save her life, and my hope and my love have ended in that!" And he pointed to the body. "Why am I spared? I vow to God I would willingly be dead." Thus he went on complaining and mourning until his voice died away, when he burst into tears, and turned his back upon his wife's body, and resumed his former attitude.

Bitter sad this blow was indeed, to him and to all of us. I looked at the body, with a dreadful remorse in my heart. I felt as if I had killed her by that struggle on the yacht's forecastle. But it would not do to sit lamenting our misfortunes and bewailing the dead. We were eight living men and women, castaways, and in me, at least, the instinct of life was a passion that seemed to have taken a violence from my salvation from the sea that lay boiling and roaring in front of me. Where had we been shipwrecked? What was this island? What shelter would it offer us? Was help to be obtained? These were the questions which swarmed into my head.

There was a small space of rising ground a short walk from where Sir Mordaunt and the others were, and I made my way to it, that I might be alone and able to reflect, and also because it was an

eminence that would furnish me with some view of the island. My movements were very languid, and my bones ached sorely; but I was grateful to find that my limbs were sound, which seemed an incredible thing when I reflected upon the terrible violence with which I had been dashed ashore.

I gained the top of the little hill, for I may as well call it so, though it was no more than a small rise in the land, about sixteen or twenty feet above the level of the island, and stood there leaning against the wind, that was now very nearly a whole gale. I first looked towards the sea. Where the reef was the water was blowing up in clouds of smoke, as though it was really boiling, as it only seemed to be. It was the most terrific picture of commotion I had beheld for many a long year. The great Atlantlic seas, reared to a vast height by the fury of the wind, came rolling along with a wild kind of majesty out of the haze of spray which narrowed the horizon to within a league; the crests of them broke into wildernesses of shining froth as they ran; but whenever they smote the reef, that lay in a curve trending on my right to the westward, and coiling round into the north with the conformation of the beach, they were shattered into a perfect world of snow, which again was furiously agitated, and flashed in a magnificent tumultuous

play, in pyramids and cones and such shapes, until near the shore, where the shoaling ground forced the giddy tumblers into some regularity of swing, and they swept in dazzling ivory white volumes upon the beach, filling the air with a most indescribable and soul-subduing roaring noise. A curtain of slate-coloured cloud was stretched across the heavens. I shaded my eyes and gazed fixedly at the boiling on the reef, but not a vestige of the yacht was to be seen. It was an awful thing to look upon that raging water, and not be able to see the merest relic of the brave, stout, beautiful fabric that had borne us so many hundreds of miles across the breast of the deep. My heart stopped still when I thought of our preservation, and of my own especially. I had not realized the desperate and breathless and thrilling wonder of it until I stood upon this little hill and looked down at that fearful sea. It made me raise my clasped hands and turn my face up to God. It was a speechless thanksgiving, for I made no prayer beyond what was in my face that I turned up in adoration, and with a heart full of tears.

I now put my back to the wind, to survey the island. How small it was you may guess when I tell you that even from the little vantage ground I occupied I could view the sea nearly all around it.

I believed at first it was the island of Little Inagua, and in that faith searched and searched in the south-west for signs of the coast of the greater island of that name, but I could see nothing. I then began to think it was too small for Little Inagua, nor was it conceivable that we should have been wrecked so far to the south as that island. As I might judge, the island was not above two miles from east to west, and a little more than a mile from north to south. It was a coral island, what is called a Cay in those parts, almost entirely flat, with a little bay in the south east, formed by the curvature of a piece of land that resembled in shape the hind leg of a horse when lifted. Here and there were groups of dwarf trees, nothing tropical in their appearance. About a pistol shot from the base of the hill was a mass of stunted vegetation that ran to the right and entirely covered the limb of land. Indeed, this island was no more than a desert, inhospitable rock, scarcely more than a reef, without signs of any living creature upon it. Again and again I tried to penetrate the haze which the gale blew up out of the foaming sea, and which hung like a fog all around the horizon, in the hope of perceiving higher land, but in vain. As far as I could cast my eyes the ocean was a storming blank, and, for the solitude of it, this

rock might have been in the middle of the great Pacific.

What was to be done? Here we were, cast away upon an island, without a boat, without any visible means of escape; surrounded by reefs, as was easily to be guessed from the appearance of the water, the very sight of which was like a death-warrant, since they were an assurance that no vessels would attempt the navigation of these waters, at least to approach this island near enough to see us. I battled hard with the feeling of consternation that seized me, but I could not subdue it. How were we to support life? How were the women to be sheltered? How were we to make our situation known?

I stood staring around me, with a deep despair in my heart; but this wore off after a little, and I then quitted the hill and walked with difficulty against the heavy wind to the beach, where Tripshore and Hunter stood looking at the sea. The crashing of the breakers and the bellowing of the gale made conversation impossible here, so I motioned to the men to accompany me to the group of trees to one of which the yacht's warp still remained attached, and here we found some shelter.

I sat down, feeling very weak and trembling, and then seeing Mrs. Stretton and Miss Tuke look-

ing our way, I invited them by a gesture to this shelter. Mrs. Stretton helped Carey to rise, and I was heartily rejoiced to see the poor girl capable of walking. Miss Tuke put her arm round her uncle's neck and spoke to him. He looked in our direction, and then at the body of his wife, as though he would not leave it; but on Norie speaking to him, he rose and came to us, helped along by Norie and his niece.

I did not know until afterwards that my poor friend had been very nearly drowned when the yacht went to pieces. He was midway along the rope when the vessel broke up, and the warp dropping into the sea, he fell with it, and had to be dragged ashore through the breakers. As I looked at him, and noted his hollow face, his hair wildly blowing, his long beard scattering like smoke upon his shirt-front, and his knees feebly yielding to his weight as he slowly advanced, leaning forwards to the gale, I thought of him as he stood to receive me at the *Lady Maud's* side in Southampton Water—how full of life and health he was then; how hopefully he looked forward to this summer cruise; how proudly he conducted me over his vessel, and I recalled his tenderness and anxiety for his wife. There *she* lay, cold and senseless as the coral strand upon which the breakers were

roaring in thunder. Her time had come, and she was at rest. But her motionless figure, painfully hidden by the rough jacket which Hunter had taken off his back to lay over her, was a most dreadful object for us in our distracted and miserable condition to have full in our sight; and when I looked from it to the halting figure of the husband as he came along, I was moved to a degree I have no words to express.

They led him to where I was seated, and he sunk down upon the ground. The others drew near, some of them sat, some stood. I broke the silence by saying:—

"There are eight of us living, and we must go to work now and think how we may prolong our lives, and ultimately save ourselves. I have been trying to discover other land near us, but the weather is too thick to see any distance. Tripshore —Tom Hunter—have you any notion what part of the Bahamas this is?"

They both answered no.

"Let the island be what it will," I continued, "we cannot be far from inhabited land. We may take hope from that," said I, addressing the women.

"We ought to look for water, sir," exclaimed Tripshore.

"Yes," cried Norie, eagerly. "I am thirsty to

death. The salt water I swallowed has left me intolerably parched."

"Will you help Tripshore to seek for water?" I asked.

"Willingly—but where are we to look for it?" he replied, casting his eyes about.

"Everywhere," said Tripshore bluntly.

"Try for a natural well, first," said I. "If that can't be found, there's a stretch of sand yonder. Dig into it with your hands, or with anything you can find knocking about, and you may come to fresh water."

"I have read that fresh water may be found sometimes by digging in the sand," exclaimed Sir Mordaunt, in a feeble voice.

"Come, sir," said Tripshore to Norie; and the two men marched off.

They had scarcely left us when I caught sight of what looked like a stretch of canvas, resembling an immense mass of seaweed, coiling over with the bend and fall of the breakers. It washed up the beach, but was swept back again, but I saw it would be stranded presently. It at once occurred to me that if we could secure that canvas we should be able to rig up a very tolerable shelter; whereupon I called Hunter's attention to it, and told him to come with me and endeavour to drag the sail up

the beach out of the breakers. He ran down to the beach before me, being much sounder and more active than I; and watching his chance as the canvas was swept up, and the fore part of it stranded, he plunged as high as his knees into the whirl of recoiling foam, and grasped the sail. By this time I had reached his side. We hauled together, and every breaker helping us, we managed to drag the sail out of the water. It proved to be the schooner's main gaff-topsail. It had most of its gear attached to it, particularly a length of halliards. We waited whilst the water drained out of it, and then seizing it afresh we dragged it towards the trees.

Sir Mordaunt had gone back to the body of his wife, and sat crouched alongside of it, exposed to the strong wind. This made me see the necessity of burying the corpse as soon as possible. But first it was necessary to furnish the women with some kind of shelter. So having got the sail among the trees we fell to work, Miss Tuke and Mrs. Stretton lending a hand. Hunter had a clasp knife in his pocket, and with this we cut away the gear, and divided it into lengths to serve as laniards. These laniards we hitched to the bolt-rope by making holes in the canvas, and then selecting a couple of trees for stanchions, we rigged up a kind

of tent, the windward side only (as the wind then blew) being protected, for the sail was not big enough to furnish us with four walls as well as a roof.

Rude and imperfect as this contrivance was, however, yet no sooner were the women inside than they felt the comfort of it. Had we been in dry clothes the wind might have seemed warm enough, but our garments being soaked to the skin gave the gale an edge of chilliness that kept the flesh shuddering. Hence this shelter from the wind was a very great comfort indeed. It took us but a short while to rig up the sail, nor could the wind demolish it, thanks to the trees, which broke the force of the gale, and supplied us with uprights as strong as rocks. When our work was completed I went to Sir Mordaunt, and by exerting a gentle force obliged him to come with me. I led him into a corner of the tent, and made him sit upon the grass, that was coarse and thick, but stunted like the trees, as if the blowing of spray from the beach had checked its growth without killing it. I then whispered to Miss Tuke that we were going to remove the body of Lady Brookes, and begged her to stand in front of her uncle, under any pretence she could invent, so that he might not see what we were about.

"Are you going to bury her?" she exclaimed, with a look of mingled fright and grief.

"No, not before I consult Norie," I replied. "But we *must* remove the body out of the husband's sight. Pray conceal us, as I suggest, and talk to him. We shall not be long."

So saying, I quitted the tent, and motioning to Hunter, I told him to help me carry the body around the bend of the little hill, where it would be hidden, and where it might lie until we could manage to bury it. Approaching the body, we raised it reverently. The wet clothes made it a great weight, and, besides, she had been a fine, well-made woman, as I have told you. I took the arms, letting the head lie against my breast, and as we raised her I looked at the tent and saw Miss Tuke and Mrs. Stretton both standing in front of Sir Mordaunt, and effectually concealing us. But after we had advanced a few paces, a violent gust of wind blew the jacket away and left the face exposed. Hunter had his back upon it, and was spared the sight, but I had it all the way, for I could not re-cover the face without laying the body down, which I would not do, lest Sir Mordaunt should catch sight of us, and follow.

We went round the base of the hill, and put the body down upon some grass at the margin of a stretch of deep and impervious bush, resembling the growths in Australia in respect of density, the greater

portion of which was as high as my waist, though here and there it stood above my head. We laid the body down here, I say, and Hunter went back for the jacket, with which we covered the face, placing two stones upon the arms, to prevent the jacket from blowing away; and, this done, I ascended the bit of a hill, to look for Norie and Tripshore.

I saw them, when I had mounted a few feet, about a quarter of a mile distant, walking fast, and skirting the shrubbery, that extended, with a very clean, well-defined edge, athwart the island, as far as the horse-limb curve of land, as though human hands had planted it.

I shouted to them, and Tripshore waved his hand, and when they were within hearing distance the man hallooed out, "We have found water, sir!"

This was a joyful piece of news. It made my heart flutter, and filled me with as deep a transport as ever the intelligence that help was coming could have done.

"They have found water!" I bawled to Hunter, who stood at some distance from me.

He cried back, "Thanks to the Lord for it, sir! We should all have been mad for a drink presently."

I then joined him, and whilst we stood waiting for the others, I asked him, having had no oppor-

tunity to do so before, how he had managed to save his life, and what had become of the other men. His story was very short and simple. When the yacht struck, all of the crew who were below rushed on deck. Pitch dark as it was, a number of men groped their way to what I have already called the long-boat. They managed to get her over, but how he could not explain, beyond implying that they worked like fiends in their terror, and launched her, he believed, by sheer force of muscle. Nobody thought of anything but saving his life. The belief was that the yacht would clear the reef and founder in the deep water beyond. (Note.—They believed it was a reef because they could not see the least signs of land.) Hunter knew that some men were drowning in the water to leeward of the deck, by the bubbling cries which came out of the darkness that way, but it was impossible to help them. When the boat was over, they could see her plainly enough upon the foam, and the men jumped for her, some missing her, and vanishing alongside. Hunter jumped and reached her, but he could not tell me how many souls were in her: she was about half full, he thought. But scarcely had they shoved clear of the vessel when a sea took and capsized the boat, and then what followed was just a dream to him. He, being a good swimmer, struck out, not knowing

where he was going, for he could see nothing but the white water; but after battling, he knew not how long, he was caught by the breakers and flung ashore, where he lay motionless, and almost lifeless, for a spell. When the dawn came he found himself alone, and the yacht on her beam ends on the reef, with the sea bursting in clouds over her after deck. He saw me standing in the companion, and then Tripshore, but he did not believe there were any more people alive until he saw the rest of our party crowd into the bows. It was he, he said, who caught me by the hair when the breakers had flung me along; but he could not keep hold, and the water swept me back again. The next time he caught me by the arm, and held me until the breaker had spent itself, and then dragged me high and dry. Carey, he added, owed her life to Tripshore, who watched for her as he (Hunter) had watched for me, and managed to get her ashore the first time the sea threw her up. Hunter saved Norie in the same way, "and it was wonderful," said he, "how quiet the doctor" (for so Norie was called by the men) "took his bath. I lugged him out, and he was as fresh as a man swimming for to please himself. But Lady Brookes' gall was all but gone, sir. She was black in the face, and not a stir in her when Mr. Tripshore brought her out o' the wash yonder."

Norie and Tripshore now joined us. I at once inquired about the water.

"It's t'other side of the island, past them mangrove bushes," answered Tripshore, coming close to me, and pointing. "It's a made well, not a nat'ral one, an' it's in the sand. A couple o' casks, perhaps three, have been sunk, one atop of the other, and the one atop has been left standing as high as this," says he, holding his hand about two feet above the ground, "to prevent the sand from filling it up."

"Does it look a recent job?" I asked anxiously.

"There's no telling, sir," he replied. "I take it to be the work of one of the wrecking vessels which used to knock about among these islands."*

"If that be so, then there may still be vessels which touch here," I exclaimed, with a swell of hope and elation in my heart. "Is the water good?"

"It's rain water," answered Norie; "but good enough. It has quenched my thirst, which was just maddening."

"How did you get at it," I asked.

"I dipped with my shoe," he answered, for he

* I have since ascertained that it was the practice of the small wrecking vessels which resorted to these islands to sink casks in the sand in order to obtain water. These casks were to be found in North Cat Cay, Sandy Cay, and many other islets in the neighbourhood of the Great Bahama Bank.

had on a pair of low shoes. Then grasping my arm, he pointed to the grass alongside the bushes, and exclaimed, "What is that? Is that Lady Brookes' body?"

I told him it was, and explained my reason for bringing it to that place. He went to it, lifted up the jacket, and took a long look at the face, and then coming back, he said, "It will be best to bury her at once, Walton. It shocks me to think of her lying so."

"I was only waiting for you to see her," said I. "But how can we bury her?" and turning to Hunter, I said, "Could you scoop up a grave for that body in the sand, with your hands?"

He answered yes; it would be no trouble, he thought.

Upon this I asked Norie to help him carry the body round to the east side of the hill, where there was a stretch of sand, and where they could inter the corpse without being seen by Sir Mordaunt and the women. Norie answered that he would take care the body was properly buried, and after waiting until they had carried it to the spot I had indicated, I called to Tripshore, whom I required to pilot us to the well, and returned to the little tent.

As I walked, I glanced my eye along the beach,

and noticed that several portions of wreckage were already thrown up; and numerous black fragments were to be seen amid the white swirl, vanishing and reappearing amid the roaring folds of the breakers and the further surges. But my thirst was too troublesome to suffer me to examine and secure the articles which the sea had washed ashore.

I entered the little tent briskly, and said, in as cheerful a voice as I could command, that a well of fresh water had been found, and I asked them to walk with me across the island to drink. Miss Tuke and Mrs. Stretton, who were seated near Sir Mordaunt, instantly got up, and Carey made an effort to rise. I told Tripshore to support her, and then extended my hand to the baronet, who reared himself with great difficulty and labour.

"Thank Heaven that water has been found," said he, in a voice so unlike his familiar tone, that had I not seen his lips move, I should not have believed it his. "God has not wholly forsaken us."

"Lean upon me," said I. "The distance is not great. We may think it advisable by-and-by to shift our quarters to the other side of the island. But first let us see what those breakers will give us of the wreck."

Mrs. Stretton and Miss Tuke walked first, followed by Carey, supported by Tripshore. The

mastiff followed in our wake. It was hard for Carey to have to walk to the well, but we had no vessel in which to bring water to her. When Sir Mordaunt, leaning on my arm, stepped forth from the trees, he looked and looked, and then stopped, and gripping tightly, said, in a kind of gasp, "Where is Agnes? Where is the body? What have you done with it, Walton?"

"Oh, my dear friend," I answered, wrung to the very soul by the misery in his voice, "in the name of God, believe that what we do, we do for your sake."

He sobbed convulsively, but with dry eyes, and then muttering, "God's will be done! God's will be done!" which he repeated several times, he said no more, and we slowly followed the others.

To take his mind away from his grief, and to give him some hope, too, I spoke about the well that Norie and Tripshore had discovered: how its existence proved that the island had been visited; and how, therefore, we need not despair of suffering a long captivity in this desolate spot of land. He did not, however, seem to heed me, but walked with his eyes fixed on the ground, and very often he weighed so heavily on my arm that I had some ado to bear up under him.

It still blew a heavy gale of wind, and the sea

was shrouded with the haze of the flying spray. Away to the west of the island, the sea was running in enormous surges, and the roaring of the surf upon the beach on that side of the island was like a continuous roll of thunder, and the wind was full of a fine salt rain. The sky was one great cloud. I cannot express how desolate this shadow made the whole scene of snow-white storming ocean, and this little flat island, with its chilling and stunted herbage, and its groups of dwarf trees here and there, leaning all of them somewhat to the south-east, as though inclined by some strong prevailing wind. One gleam of sunshine, one flash of the glorious tropical luminary, would have cheered our hearts; but it was our fate that the terrible disaster that had overtaken us should be attended with many circumstances of horror. The very heavens scowled upon us, and the air howled with the maledictions of the pitiless gale.

The spot where the well was sunk was within a mile of the tent. The land, as I have said, was nearly entirely flat, and the greater portion of it, beyond the coral sand, covered with grass, which was rank and long only among the bushes and under the trees. Walking was very easy. Here and there the ground was encumbered with knobs, or projections of porous rock, as though the soil that

covered the island was not everywhere deep enough to conceal its structure. As we advanced, a frigate pelican soared into the air, and struggled a minute or so with the gale, then dropped, and disappeared behind the bushes on the right. This was the only living thing I had yet seen on the island.

Tripshore led us straight to the well, which I found sunk in the sand about a hundred paces above high-water mark. It was constructed just as he had described. First, the sand had been dug out until fresh water was reached; then a cask with the ends knocked out had been sunk in the hole, and another cask placed on this, so as to raise a kind of coamings above the sand, to prevent the well from filling.

I bent my head over, and saw the water within reach of my arm, looking black, and my face reflected in it. We all stood around and I said, "What shall we use for a dipper?"

Tripshore answered, "Mr. Norie used his shoe, sir."

"None of us wears shoes," said I, casting my eyes about, "so we shall have to use a boot." And I was going to remove one of mine, when Mrs. Stretton whipped off hers and handed it to me. We were too thirsty for ceremony, so I took the boot, filled it with water, and gave it to Miss Tuke,

saying that it was not the first time in history that a woman's shoe had served for a drinking cup. She passed it to Carey, who drank greedily. I filled the boot again and again, until we had all appeased our thirst. It was the salt water that had parched us, and Sir Mordaunt and Carey drank as if they could not quench their thirst.

Our situation came home to me with dreadful force whilst I stood watching them drink. Even had we all been men, the contrast of our lot now, greedily swallowing rainwater from a boot, standing —with white faces and wet clothes, some of us half dressed and with uncovered heads—round that sunk cask,—miserable shipwrecked people, imprisoned by a raging sea, with no prospect of relief before us that the most hopeful mind could imagine; I say, even had we all been men, the contrast of our lot now with what it was aboard the *Lady Maud*, that luxurious floating home, with its hundred elegancies and comforts, would have made a bitter thought. But that contrast was tenfold heightened by the presence of the women, and especially by Miss Tuke. If I was not in love with her, I will not say I was far off from loving her; and so soft was my heart for her, that I could not look at her sweet face without a degree of tenderness and grief that almost shames me to recall when I remember how much

sympathy I had for her in comparison with what I had for the others, whose distress and sufferings were surely as great. Both she and Mrs. Stretton were fully dressed, having had time to clothe themselves whilst waiting for daylight in the *Lady Maud's* cabin. Carey was the worst off, having lost her hat and shawl in the water, and her dress being torn by the sea, as a squall splits a sail.

It worried me so much to see Sir Mordaunt without a coat, that I pulled off mine and begged him to wear it. He tried to get it on, but he was so much taller than I, and his shoulders proportionately broad, that it would not fit him. I wondered that he should have left the yacht, half dressed, in that way, but I afterwards remembered that he had thrown off his coat before being hauled ashore.

All having drank, I held the boot full of water to the dog, who lapped it furiously, and when the noble animal was done, I dried the boot somewhat by swinging it to and fro. But it was no better than a piece of brown paper; so I sat down, pulled off my own boots, gave one of them to Mrs. Stretton to slip on, and thrusting the other into my pocket, offered Sir Mordaunt my arm, saying that the grass was as soft as a carpet, and that my socks would dry the quicker for being uncovered.

These are but trivial things to relate, but it is such things as these which make up the story of shipwreck. I never hear now of a yachting party sailing away on an ocean cruise, but that I wonder if they imagine what shipwreck means, what being cast away, stripped of every luxury they have been used to, forced to confront the naked heavens without a shelter to protect them from the roasting sun or the blinding rain or the furious gale, signify? Death is not the worst part of the horrors of such an experience. You hear of protracted anguish ending in madness; you hear of starvation terminating in cannibalism; you hear of hardships and physical suffering converting the comeliest man into such an object of horror, that those whom God sends to succour him at last recoil with affright from the monstrous and unnatural appearance. To be shipwrecked is a terrible thing indeed; how terrible, no man can tell save he who has suffered it.

On our return we met Hunter going to the well for a drink. He asked me the road. I pointed to the well, and told him he would have to make a cup of his hands or use his boot.

"Where is Norie?" Sir Mordaunt asked me; and I thought he seemed to notice for the first time that Norie and Hunter had not accompanied us to the well. I made some answer, I forget what. He

looked at me eagerly, and with great trouble in his eyes, but asked no more questions.

On our arrival at the tent Mrs. Stretton gave me back my boot; but I was not afraid of bare feet, so I pulled off my sock and rolled up my trousers, saying with a laugh that I should not be afraid of spoiling my boots now. We found Norie in the tent, sitting, and leaning his hand on his arm. He looked as if all the hope had been crushed out of him. He was like a prisoner in a cell, haggard and shocked, and full of amazement and fear. He glanced from one to the other of us as we entered, and cried, "Don't let any one of you be alone if you can help it! You cannot guess what solitude is here! I have had about five minutes of it, and feel as if another five minutes would drive me out of my mind. The wind howls horribly through these trees! And, my God! did ever any sea roar like yonder waves?"

"Pray don't afflict us with reflections of that kind, Norie," I exclaimed, warmly. "Give Sir Mordaunt your place there, and come you along to the beach with Tripshore and me, and lend us a hand to collect the things which have been washed ashore."

He jumped up, but as he did so Sir Mordaunt gave a little cry. I looked at him, and saw that his eyes were fixed upon the jacket that had covered

the face of his wife. Norie had brought it away, and had been lying on it.

"Where is her body?" asked the baronet, addressing Norie.

It was idle to keep the matter from him, so, meeting the doctor's glance, I dropped my head.

"We have buried her," said Norie.

"It was my wish," said I, seizing Sir Mordaunt's hand.

"Oh, but without a prayer—without one last look!" he cried, in a quivering voice.

"Don't say without a prayer," exclaimed Norie. "The seaman who helped me will tell you differently."

Sir Mordaunt took his hand from mine to cover his face, on which Mrs. Stretton and Miss Tuke went to him and began to comfort him, talking as gentle and pitying women can to a man in grief. They could do better than I or Norie. I therefore beckoned to the doctor, and we trudged down to the beach, where Tripshore was bending over some object that had been thrown up by the waves.

"For heaven's sake, Norie," said I, as we went along, "don't indulge in any dismal reflections before the women. Keep up their hearts if you can. Bad as our lot is, it might be worse. This island is *terra firma*, any way. We have found water, and

now we must look for something to eat. It is much too soon to cave in, man. You ought to know that."

"Ay," he exclaimed. "But to be alone for even five minutes after burying that poor woman. . . . I thought my hospital work had cured me of all weakness; but the sweat poured from me when I put the body in the sand, dressed as it was, Walton! God preserve me! It seemed frightfully heartless to cover the face that I knew so well with the sand!"

He shuddered violently, and I own I shuddered too. He was fresh from a sad and shocking job indeed, and I was sorry I had spoken to him so warmly in the tent.

"But I *did* offer up a prayer, Walton," he added, with a singular and affecting simplicity of manner. "It was no falsehood I told Sir Mordaunt. I made a little prayer whilst Hunter filled up the hole we had scooped out."

By this time we were close to Tripshore.

"What have you there?" I called to him.

He shouted back, for the roar of the surf was deafening, "The carpenter's chest, sir."

This indeed it was. It was fitted with a shelf midway the height inside. All the tools which had been on top of this shelf were gone; but on dragging up the shelf, which lay jammed in the box like a cork in the neck of a bottle, we found the bottom

full of nails of all sorts, some half as long as my arm, together with a saw, a chopper, fashioned to serve as a hammer too, and three sailors' sheath-knives.

"We shall find these things useful," said I, "so let us drag the chest clear of all risk from the breakers."

We laid hold of it and hauled it up the beach, then returned, and in ten minutes time collected the following articles:—

The tell-tale compass, with a portion of the beam to which it had been screwed; two wooden cases, presently to be opened; a small cask, very heavy; a large kettle, the lid of which was gone and the spout warped; three spare sails; and a mass of the yacht's planks and timbers. We saved all the wood we could find, with the idea of building a hut for the women to lie in that night. We likewise searched the beach, down into the very fork of the tiny bay in the south-east corner, where the water was tolerably smooth, owing to the shelter of the limb of land I have described, and I found a quantity of timber, but nothing more to our purpose.

On opening the head of the cask, I found to my joy that it was full of salt beef, and, what was equally gladdening, the two cases contained each of them three dozens of tins of different kinds of pre-

served meats, which had been shipped for cabin use. This you may be sure we reckoned a noble discovery, for here was food ready cooked for us to eat. Forthwith we laid hold of the cases and carried them up to the tent.

"Here are the materials for two, and perhaps three, meals a day for nine days," I cried, addressing the inmates generally, "allowing each person a tin. Tripshore, go and fetch those sailors' knives. We shall all feel the better for a breakfast."

The man brought the knives, and we opened a couple of the tins, using a piece of deck-plank for a table. I divided the contents of the first tin into eight portions, and I made the same division of the meat in the second tin. Had we had bread or biscuit, or anything of that kind to eat with this preserved food, the portions would have made a fair meal. As it was, each person's share could be despatched in a few bites. But I would not open any more tins at that sitting. I had only to consider how absolutely destitute was this island of all sustenance fit for human beings, and how days and nights might pass without bringing us any help, to understand the preciousness of the food that had been cast up by the sea. Not one of our little company but appreciated my reason for opening no more tins; but the dread of giving expression to

that reason was too great to suffer any of them to speak of it.

As the piece of plank went around, with the eight portions upon it, each one took his or her share, and Hunter, arriving at that moment from the well, took his; and there we sat, the eight of us, close packed together under the sail.

Suddenly Miss Tuke said, "You have forgotten the dog, Mr. Walton."

I looked around, and saw the poor fellow lying on the grass, watching us eating with a passionate longing eye. I jumped up and ran down to the cask of beef and cut off a hunch of meat, which I threw to him. He wagged his tail, and thanked me in his dumb way, and was presently happy, gnawing upon the piece of junk.

The gale still stormed violently over the island, and the sky resembled a vast sheet of lead, with a kind of brown smoke-like scud driving along under it, and scattering, just as smoke scatters, as it went. We were close to the sea, and had the roar of the surf in our ears. The gloom of the heavens and the bellowing and crashing of the sea would have been depressing even had all been well with us. The trees made a shadow, and the sail stretched over us deepened it, and in this shadow we sat, holding our little portions of preserved meat in our

fingers, and all of us, acting upon my advice, eating very slowly; for I remembered a sailor who had been adrift for a week in an open boat telling me that by munching and munching the tiny piece of ship's bread that he was allowed twice a day, by keeping it in his mouth, and then swallowing it slowly, he made it appease his hunger, whereas when he eat it hastily it left him still famine-stricken.

Never did shipwreck create a more dismal group of human beings than we looked as we sat peering at one another in the gloom under the sail. Nor, in my opinion, did life ever establish a sharper contrast in so short a time. You are affected when a poor, hungry, shabby man is pointed out to you as one who so many years ago possessed a fortune and lived in grand style. But here were we, who only a few short hours ago enjoyed all the luxuries of a superbly appointed yacht, flung half-naked upon a desolate island, forced to squat and eat our food like savages, treasuring that poor food and valuing it at a price which the whole of the island made of gold would not have paid for; and already having proved that we had gauged deep all the horror and wretchedness of shipwreck by the exultation which the discovery of a little well of rain-water had inspired in us!

It was distracting to sit still and think upon our misfortunes. I got up from the grass and looked at the sea, to find out if any more wreckage had come ashore; and then addressing Tripshore and Hunter, I said that we were well into the day, and ought to go to work at once, and rig up a better habitation than the one over us, whilst we had the light. Yonder was plenty of wood, and we had a saw, a hammer, abundance of nails, and sailcloth. But first, on which side of the island should we construct the hut? Here, among the trees and near the beach, where we should see all that came ashore from the wreck? or over there among that clump of trees to the left of the bush, where we should be within three minutes' walk of the well?

Hunter was for crossing the island, Tripshore for stopping where we were. I asked Sir Mordaunt, who said he was for stopping; so that decided us. He wanted to come out and help us, but I swore I would not lift a finger if he quitted the shelter, as he was in no condition to work; and, moreover, I said there were enough of us and to spare.

So we left him with the women; and the four of us, that is, Norie, the seamen, and I, went down to the beach and brought up the fragments of wreck to the trees, where we presently had a great pile of deck-planking, and portions of the skin of the vessel,

and other parts of her; for she had gone to pieces, I may say, as a house falls in. She had been ground into fragments by the great sea that had beaten her down upon the jagged, iron-hard reef. We then brought the tool-chest along, and set to work to nail the wreckage to the trees. This took us a long time, for we had but one hammer; but happily some of the deck-planking had been thrown up in middling big pieces—that is, there would be three or four planks nailed together—and this enabled us to push forward with our job.

It did us good to work. It kept us from pining and brooding over our troubles; and the baronet and the women watched us from the shelter of their tent, for, as I have said, it was open on both sides, and the trees we selected as uprights for our hut were to the right. We had no means of keeping a reckoning of time. I was the only one of the party who had a watch, and it had stopped when I was in the water. We had no sun to guess the hour by; but I supposed it would be about three o'clock by the time we had fairly framed in a group of trees, forming an enclosure that might be nearly twelve feet by ten and about six feet in height.

We broke off when we had got so far, and sent Hunter with the kettle to the well, and divided the contents of another tin of meat; but neither Miss

Tuke nor Mrs. Stretton would take her portion. They said they were not hungry, that they could not eat, so I laid their shares aside; and the filled kettle—for it was a large vessel—serving to give us a good drink all round, we fell to work with renewed energy to roof in our strange structure with the sails. This was not an easy task, for the trees in the middle of the hut were in the way. However, we managed it by cutting the cloths so as to let the trees come into them. One sail was enough to make a roof. It was, indeed, a spare fore-topsail, and by means of laniards we triced it as taut as a drum-skin. To make the shelter more complete, we passed another sail round the hut outside as far as it would stretch. We then unbent the sail that had served us as a tent, and that by this time was thoroughly dry, and spread it over the floor of the hut as a carpet. And not yet satisfied, I made Tripshore help me to cut up the remaining sail, which we nailed to the trees inside in such a manner that one part of the interior was entirely screened. This space I meant for the women to sleep in.

We had scarcely finished, and were looking about us to see what more could be done, when the interior of our little shelter grew bright, and stepping outside, I saw the sun flashing with a watery-reddish brilliance in the west. The great leaden cloud that

had heavily overhung us all day was broken up into masses of dark vapour, which were solemnly journeying across the sky, and here and there among them were glimpses of misty blue. The horizon was clear, the gale had broken and was falling, but the ocean was still a wild, tumultuous, leaping, and rushing surface, of a silver and splendid brilliancy of creaming white under the sun, and from the reef to the beach the water resembled hurling volumes of snow.

That beam of reddish sunshine fell upon my heart like a blessing. I stood with clasped hands gazing at it with a rapture I have no words for, and presently turning to call the others, I found them all looking; ay, the very dog stood there looking at the sun. The glorious light sparkled in the eyes of the women, and I saw Ada Tuke gazing with such an expression in her face as a shipwrecked sailor wears when he watches a vessel coming his way.

"Praise God for that encouragement!" I cried, pointing to the sun. "It is meant to give us hope."

"There's another cask come ashore, sir!" shouted Tripshore, and he and I and Hunter dashed down to the beach.

I overhauled the marks upon it, and sung out, "It's either brandy or sherry. Roll it up, boys, to the hut, and we'll test it there."

It was full, and we had a hard job to get it along. Sir Mordaunt said it was sherry; but, valuable as it was, I would have given twenty such casks for one of biscuit.

I felt greatly fatigued after the hard work, and harder excitement and emotions of the day, and went to rest myself in the hut. Carey lay dozing on the sail. Sir Mordaunt joined me, leaving the others outside. The sight of the sun and the breaking clouds had heartened my poor friend somewhat. There was a little more life in him, I mean, and his heart seemed a bit eased of that oppression of grief which had been in his face during the day.

He came and sat down alongside of me, and, clasping my hand, looked at me without speaking for some moments.

"Oh, Walton," he presently exclaimed. "This is a bitter and cruel termination of our cruise. My conscience accuses me as the author of all this misery. It was my blind confidence in Purchase that has led to this."

"Nay, don't fret over these matters," said I. "What we have to do is to get away from this island."

"All this privation," he continued, "ay, months of exile and suffering here, I could have borne without a murmur, if my poor wife had been pre-

served. But to think of her being dead—killed, indeed, by those very efforts I had made to restore her to health——" He broke off, and lifted up his hands with a gesture of speechless grief.

I said all that I could to soothe him, and talked to some purpose, for he calmed down after a little, and when I spoke of our situation he listened attentively. I told him I could not imagine upon what part of the Bahamas we were wrecked. "There can be no doubt whatever," said I, "that Purchase was miles out of his reckoning—I mean without reference to his false estimate of our drift to the westward. Unhappily, I have no knowledge of these seas, but I know that some of the larger islands are populated, and I do not suppose that we can be very far distant from one of the inhabited islands."

"But what means have we of leaving this place?" said he. "We have no boat. I see no chance of deliverance unless a vessel should come near."

"That is certainly our outlook at the present moment," I replied; "but we need not despair. You may read of extraordinary things having been done by people in our position; and some among us, Sir Mordaunt, are not men to sit down and wait for an opportunity to come."

"God knows, Walton, what we should have done

without you," said he; and he was proceeding, when I stopped him by saying that before it fell dark I would ascend the little hill and have a look around for land. He said he would go too; he had not seen the island, and would like to view it from that point.

"Let us all go," said I; "for one may have sharper eyes than the rest."

So we left the hut, and I asked Miss Tuke and Mrs. Stretton to join us. I also called to Norie and the seamen, and the whole company of us started for the hill, leaving Carey dozing in the hut, and the dog to keep watch beside her.

(Note here, that Mrs. Stretton's boot that we had used as a cup being still wet, she put on my boot for this walk; and I took notice of the very elegant shape of her foot as she leaned against a tree in order to put on the boot.)

I walked in advance with Miss Tuke, and though the road was a short one, we managed to say a great deal. She spoke of her aunt, and asked where she was buried. On my telling her, she exclaimed, "I believe she would not have lived many hours in this island. The grief and terror would have killed her. She could not endure pain or hardship. And perhaps she may prove to be the luckiest of us all," she added, in a tremulous voice.

"Don't talk like that yet," said I. "There are too many chances in our favour to make such fancies reasonable. Besides, you are our heroine. We all look up to you when our spirits are low."

She shook her head at this.

"I wish I could see you in comfortable dry clothes," said I. "If we could only manage to make a fire, we would soon dry our clothes."

"Don't think of me more than of yourself and the others," she answered. "Of all of us, poor Mrs. Stretton is most to be pitied. This is her second shipwreck in a very short time, and when I recall what she went through on that half-sunk wreck, I cannot help thinking that we are very well off."

"That's well said."

"She is a most gentle, womanly creature," she continued. "I am sure her sympathy soothed Uncle Mordaunt. Each of them has been similarly bereaved, and what she said to him carried a weight that no words of mine could have taken."

We gained the top of the little hill. The windward sky was clearing fast, and the blue of it was growing pure. No more than a fresh breeze was now blowing, and I reckoned that it would all be gone by sunset. The circumference of the deep lay open to us, saving one small part blocked out by trees in the north-west. We searched the circle

narrowly, but, good as my sight was, I at all events could perceive nothing but the water.

"How far should we be able to see from this height, sir?" inquired Hunter.

"About fourteen or fifteen miles in clear weather," I answered.

"Isn't that land out there?" exclaimed Mrs. Stretton, crossing to my side, and pointing to the right of the track of the sun.

I gazed and gazed. Suddenly Miss Tuke cried, "Yes! there is a little film there—a tiny blue shadow —I see it plainly."

"Right you are, Miss," said Tripshore. "There it is, Mr. Walton!"

I thought I saw it, but when I shut my eyes to clear them, and looked again, it was gone. None of the rest of our party could see the tiny shadow, which made those who saw it wonder, for they said it stood there plain enough. I took for granted that it was land, and asked Tripshore if his memory carried the chart sharply enough to recall what island would have land bearing in that direction from it, visible, say, about twenty miles? He puzzled and reflected, and knit his brows, but the poor fellow could not remember. Indeed, it was not a thing to be guessed. If you look at the Bahama Islands, you will see how crowded the chart is with

rocks and cays and reefs and islets, similar to the one on which we had been cast. It was idle to recall Purchase's reckoning, for I knew that we were much further to the west than that, and much further to the south too, I was sure. But there was no use speculating upon that shadow which Miss Tuke and the other two saw. If it were land, we should never be able to find out what land it was by guessing. Elsewhere the horizon was quite bare.

"But so much the better," said I, gazing into the east; "for if that water out yonder is clear, surely there will be vessels traversing it, bound to or from Providence Channel or the Florida and North Carolina coasts to the West India Islands. Don't you think so, Tripshore?"

"I do, sir. Anyhow, the chance is good enough to make a look-out a necessity. If we could raise a flare, something might come of it when it falls dark."

"But how are we to get a light?" I asked. "Who has any matches?"

The men felt about their pockets, but to no purpose. Sailors seldom carry lights; the galley-fire is their lucifer-match. We all searched, but none of us had any matches, nor the means of procuring fire.

"Something to make fire may come ashore in the night," said Hunter. "There's no use despairin'."

Still it was terribly vexing to be without fire. There were many reasons why a flare would have been good for us. We could have dried our clothes; we could have cooked the salt beef in the kettle; it would have made a cheerful light, too, something to keep watch by; above all, we should never be able to guess what it would be doing for us—what passing distant vessel it might attract, that would lay-to and wait for the morning, to run down to us, the mere dream of which would have acted like a cordial upon our spirits. The want of fire was the harder to bear because the bush promised excellent fuel, and with our knives we could have gathered enough to last us through the night. Norie spoke of rubbing sticks together. I told him that read very well in books, that no doubt there were savage tribes who got fire in that way, though they must be artists to do it, and have the right kind of wood too.

"But you might try it, if you will, Norie," said I.

(He did try that same night. He got a couple of pieces of wood, and rubbed until the sweat ran down him like water. But so far from catching fire, the wood was scarcely warm, though he had worked like a horse.)

After lingering a while on the hill, looking at

the sea, and watching the red sunlight wax and wane as the clouds rolled over the setting orb, we went slowly towards the hut.

I was determined to do my best to keep up the spirits of the people, and made some of them smile by suggesting that we should take a drink of the sherry out of the kettle.

"It's too good to dip a boot into," said I. "Besides, I couldn't fancy sherry out of a boot—not even out of Mrs. Stretton's boot, small as it is."

"But you won't dip that great black kettle into the wine?" said Miss Tuke, with a laugh, that made us all seem to forget our troubles for the moment.

"No; but if we could manage to bale some of it into the kettle," I answered, "we could each of us take a pull at the spout."

Here Hunter walked off to the beach, to look, as I supposed, for any articles that might have come ashore. I told Tripshore to open a couple of tins of meat, whilst I and Norie worked at the cask of wine; and whilst we were full of this business, comes back Hunter with a big shell in his hand, and gives it to me with a face of triumph.

"There's a baler for ye, sir—the biggest I could find in this light," says he. "Mr. Tripshore, there's a box away down in the cove" (meaning the little

creek at the end of the beach). "Will you come along and help to bring it up?"

"Save all that you can," said I; and away went the two men.

Having got the head of the wine-cask open, I dipped the shell into the sherry, and handed it to Mrs. Stretton. It held near upon a gill. It was better than drinking out of the kettle, and I admired Hunter's readiness. Pretty it was to see the women drinking the wine from the shell, that was deeper than an oyster shell, yet of that shape, thickly ribbed, and each rib defined by a red line. I filled the shell for Carey, and then handed it to the baronet, to help himself and pass it on, whilst I divided the meat into portions, as before.

It was a wretched meal, not enough for us by I know not how much; and I bitterly deplored the want of a little biscuit to distribute with it, or such fruit as any man might have hoped to find on a tropical island, where there was soil enough to give life to bushes and trees.

I felt desperately low-spirited whilst dividing the poor repast. I kept on thinking, "What in God's name shall we do if we are not succoured before our slender provisions are exhausted?" But the arrival of Tripshore and Hunter with the box took me away from these melancholy thoughts, and I went

out to inspect the new acquisition. As I approached it, Tripshore sidled up to me, and whispered in my ear, "There's two dead bodies come ashore, sir. One's the cook, and t'other's poor Jim Wilkinson. Better say nothen about it. Me and Tom'll steal away presently, and bury 'em."

I nodded, and began to handle the box.

"Why, Carey, is not this yours?" exclaimed Miss Tuke.

The girl looked, and said yes, it was her box.

"It is locked," said I. "Have you the key?"

She fumbled in her pocket, or rather in the hole where the pocket should have been; but the sea had torn that convenience away.

"You can break it open, sir," said the poor girl, simply. "I know what's in it."

I broke the lock with the chopper, and told her to explore the contents, as for all we knew it might contain something that should prove of great value to us. She came readily, and kneeled down, and began to take the articles out of the box, whilst we stood around. The hope I had that among the contents there might be a box of matches was soon dashed. The box, though well made, and a good box of its kind, was full of water, and the things lay soaking in it, like clothes in a washtub. Among the contents I remember were an old-fashioned Prayer-

book, a work-box completely fitted, some dresses, a hat, some under-linen, a pair of boots, a bundle of letters, which flaked away in Carey's hand when she fished them up, and the sight of which made her cry bitterly. We stretched the wearing apparel upon the grass to dry, and then, whilst the others went to get their mouthful of supper, I cut off another piece of junk for the dog, and got the kettle ready for Hunter to fill it when he had done his meal.

CHAPTER VI.

By this time the sun was very low, the wind almost gone, the sea rapidly calming, and every promise of a fine bright night in the sky. After Hunter returned with the kettle from the well, he followed Tripshore down into the creek, where they buried the two bodies in the sand. Before they came back the sun had vanished, and the night had closed upon the sea; but happily for us, who were without artificial light, there was a bright moon in the south-west, which, though only half the orb was visible, flashed a silver glory upon the water, and was strong enough to give sharp black shadows to the trees.

When Tripshore returned, he held out some object to me, which, on first viewing it in his hands, I had taken to be a piece of spar; but it proved to be one of the telescopes belonging to the *Lady Maud*, the one that had stood on brackets in the after-companion. He whispered to me that he had found it close against the body of Jim Wilkinson.

This was a grand discovery, though its most significant value did not immediately occur to me. All that I thought of was how useful it would be to search the horizon with, and examine the coast, which Mrs. Stretton was the first to see. I called to Sir Mordaunt that Tripshore had found one of the telescopes, and everybody came running to look at it, whilst I sat down to unscrew the lenses and dry them; which done, I pointed the glass at the moon, and was overjoyed to discover that the sea had done no injury whatever to the telescope.

"Can you see through it all right, sir?" inquired Tripshore.

"Ay," said I. "Look for yourself."

But instead of putting the glass to his eye, he stood like a man musing, and then said, "Can't ye guess a fine use for this glass, Mr. Walton, in the day time, when the sky's clear?"

"What do you mean, Tripshore?" said I.

"Why," said he, "here's a toobe full o' burning

glasses. When the sun's up, you'll want no lucifer-matches. You'll get fire and to spare with e'er a one of them magnifiers."

I had not thought of this; but it made the glass so precious, that in my delight at possessing it I grasped Tripshore by the hand, and gripped it—rather too cordially, I remember, for when I let go, the poor fellow turned his back upon me, in order to chafe away the pain of the squeeze.

But the dew was falling very heavily, and the night air had that peculiar chilliness which any man who knows those latitudes will recall. Our damp clothes rendered us very sensitive to the swift change of temperature. I advised Sir Mordaunt and the women to enter the hut, and take their rest for the night. But first the baronet asked us to join him in a prayer. We readily assented, and knelt in a circle, Sir Mordaunt kneeling in the midst of us. Of all moving moments, I never experienced the like of that short time in which we knelt, whilst my poor friend prayed aloud. Our knowing the agony of mind his wife's death caused him, made us find such a pathos in every tone of his, as none of us could hear without dim eyes. He struggled hard to steady his voice whilst he offered up thanks for our merciful salvation, and implored God's continued protection of the lives He had preserved. But he

would pray for his wife too, which taxed him beyond endurance, for he utterly broke down at that part of his prayer, and sobbed so lamentably that it seemed he must break his heart.

When he had recovered his composure, I urged the women to withdraw to their part of the hut, and gave them some pieces of canvas to use for coverlets. I then rolled up a short breadth of the side of the sail that we had spread upon the grass to serve as a pillow, and made Sir Mordaunt put his head upon it; and when he was laid down I covered his shoulders with Hunter's jacket—I mean the jacket that had covered his wife's face. Norie lay down beside him, and the dog crouched at their feet.

It was quite dark in the hut, but the white sail spread in the bottom of it made a kind of glimmer, and helped us somewhat. I went into the open with the two seamen, and though I was reluctant to keep them standing and talking after the sufferings and labour of the day, I could not forbear to call a council of them now that all was still, the peace and the radiance of the night upon us, the wind gone, and nothing to distract our minds from close contemplation of our position.

First, I told them that it was necessary we should keep watch. Although we had no means of signalling a passing vessel, yet it would be a thousand

pities if one should pass when we were asleep. For what we desired to know was, was this part of the sea navigable? and did vessels ever traverse it within sight of the island? If we could be sure on this head our hopes would gain strength, and we should have good reason for making a smoke in the day and burning a flare at night.

"Ay, sir, a look-out must be kept," said Tripshore.

"There are three of us," said I.

"But how'll the man on duty know when his watch is up?" inquired Hunter.

This was a poser; for, as I have told you, we were without the means of calculating the passage of time. At last I said—

"We must do the best we can by guessing. The moon will help us for a spell. If we make a three hours' watch, each man will get some hours' rest. We must reckon how the time goes as best we can."

They were very willing, they said; and so that matter was settled, and it was agreed that I should keep the first look-out.

"And now," said I, "how are we to get away from this island? Our stock of food is very small, though more may wash ashore. But let as much as may come, it will not last eight men and women long; and we're bound to starve if we stop here."

"There's only one thing to be done," said Hunter. "We must turn to and build a raft—something that'll float—with a life-line around it, and likewise a mast. We must make the best job we can—something that'll steer—and one or two of us 'll have to go adrift in it, and take our chance of bein' picked up, and getting the wessel as picks us up to call for the others."

I shook my head. "If," said I, "we could be sure that the land some of you have seen was inhabited, why then, though it should be fifty miles distant, one or two of us, as you say, Hunter, might venture for it on a raft. But to risk our lives, merely to be stranded on such another rock as this, would be a mad thing. You'll get no raft to do more than swoosh along straight with the wind, and I see no good to come of going adrift, with the certain chance of being blown away to sea, and either foundering or dying of want."

"You're right, sir," said Tripshore, gravely. "A raft 'ud be sartin death, Tom."

"But it's sartin death if we stop here too!" exclaimed Hunter. "Though a raft 'ud give us a poor chance, it 'ud still be a chance; but this blooming island gives us no chance at all."

"Why not rig up a raft—a dummy—a small 'un, with a mast and sail, and a board at the masthead

wrote on to signify that there are eight shipwrecked persons aboard this island, and send it adrift, with the chance of some wessel overhauling it?" exclaimed Tripshore.

The idea was original and striking. I said at once—

"Yes, we can do that. It shall be our first job in the morning. With a cloth or two of canvas set square on a well-stayed mast, a raft is bound to blow along; and if our chance lies in her being seen by a vessel, then she'll answer our purpose better than if she were manned, for she'll risk no lives."

Hunter turned his head, and, looking towards the beach, said, in a low voice, "Would it be a bad job to lash one of them dead bodies in the sand yonder to it? She'd make a likelier arrand for us with a body aboard than if she went naked. A ship 'ud stop if they sighted a body, but if they saw northen on the raft, maybe they'd pass on without heeding the board at the masthead."

The suggestion offended me for a moment, but only for a moment. What Hunter had said was perfectly true. A body on the raft would twenty-fold increase our chance, by inducing a vessel to approach it, whereas if the people of the vessel saw only a bare raft, they might pass on. What would

it matter to the dead, whether he was left in the sand there, or sent adrift to find a grave in the bottom of the deep? Life was dearer to us than sentiment. We must be succoured or we must perish. A dead man would make a ghastly messenger, but we should send him forth in God's name; and whether he should be swept away or be encountered by a ship, he was sure of ultimately finding a resting-place in the sea.

We stood talking briskly a full ten minutes over this scheme, and then, there being nothing more to say, I told the men to turn in, but first to take a sup of sherry. This they did, and entered the hut, and I was left alone.

As I had foreseen, the wind had died away with the sun. I could feel only the lightest current of air. Here and there a white cloud floated, scarcely moving athwart the stars, and some of them carrying delicate and phantom-like rainbows in the parts they turned to the moon. Some of the stars were very large and beautiful, and the deep, unspeakable, velvet-dark depths of the heavens seemed tremulous with the incessant showering of meteors. There was still a heavy swell rolling along the path of the vanished gale, and as these majestic and foamless coils of ebony water passed under the moon, they flashed into mountains of quicksilver. The reef

hindered the run of these rollers on our side of the island, but there was surf enough along the beach to fill the night with a most lamentable moaning noise. It was as though the sea in mockery gave our misery a voice. It was a most depressing sound to stand and idly listen to, and cruelly brought home to me our desolate condition, and our lonely and helpless plight in the midst of this dark water, with its sullen rollers and its lamenting voice wailing close at our ears.

As I looked at the moon and the peaceful sky, I thought with bitterness that had such a night as this come to us twenty-four hours sooner, the *Lady Maud* would still have been afloat. I pictured how her decks would have shown, and imagined Lady Brookes in her invalid's chair near the skylight, and Ada Tuke flitting from one side of the deck to the other in the moonlight, and Sir Mordaunt pacing to and fro, and so on, and so on. I say I stood dreaming forth a whole picture of the schooner as she would have appeared on such a night as this, until I broke away with a shudder from the dreadful contrast of our position, and walked down to the beach, in the hope of distracting my mind in a hunt after more relics of the wreck.

The tide was lower by many feet down the beach, and though I could not see the reef on which

the yacht had struck, yet I guessed, by the play of white water there, that when the sea was calm at low tide the reef would be visible. There was a dark object almost abreast of the hut upon the gleaming coral sand, and on approaching it I discovered it to be a full cask, but what it contained I could not tell. There could be no doubt, however, from its appearance, that it held provisions of some sort, so I set to work to clear away the sand that buried it by about a foot and a half, and tumbling it on its bilge, I managed to roll it some distance above high-water mark, where it would be safe from the sea.

I returned again close to the surf, and slowly followed the line of it as it trended away to the north-east and then into the south-east, where it terminated in the bight of the limb of land. The moon shone brilliantly, and I could see very plainly. Presently, and at about three hundred paces from the spot where I had found the cask, I saw a square black object in the water, which covered and exposed it as the rollers came in and ran back. I was much puzzled to know what it could be, until, after looking for some time, I perceived that it was the yacht's piano!

A little further on was a pile of fragments of timber high and dry; and just beyond again was a

spare fore-topmast, and the yacht's fore-top-gallant and topsail yards, the sails bent and the gaskets holding tight. These, it will be remembered, had been sent down during the gale. I thought that we might come to require those spars, but they were too heavy for me to drag up the beach; so, after having carried a quantity of timber up the shore, I went to the trees where the hut stood, and hauled in the line by which Sir Mordaunt and the others had been dragged from the yacht, and which had parted close to the vessel when she went to pieces. With this end of stuff I returned to the spars, hitched the line round them, and made the end fast up the beach, so that the tide should not carry them away.

All this was very hard work, but not to be neglected. I was tired, and was going to sit down, when I spied a dead body on the sand about fifty yards this side of where the beach terminated in the creek. It lay on its back, with its arms out, and its head on its right shoulder, in the very posture of a crucified figure. I recognized it as a man named Martin Jewell, a young man, in life fresh-faced and smiling, and a very willing sailor. He looked to be asleep, so easy was the appearance of his face in the moonlight, though his eyes were open. I know not why his quiet look should have

made me think this dead man frightful; but I should have been less shocked and scared had he presented the usual dreadful appearance of the drowned. Maybe, it was my knowing him to be stone-dead, and his looking lifelike and sleeping, that made me recoil and tremble. And you must add the surroundings, too: the breezeless atmosphere, the moaning of the sea, the steady white fires of the moon upon the water, the swell sparkling like silver as it ran across the wake of the orb, the large stars looking down, with the shining dust of meteors quivering and fading among them. I say, figure this scene, and then think of the stirless dead body lying like a dreaming man, looking straight up at the sky, as though he followed the flight of his spirit.

I shook off the feelings which possessed me, and fetching a piece of jagged plank from the pile beyond, I dug a hole in the sand, which occupied me about ten minutes; but when I tried to put down the outstretched arms of the body, I found they would not yield. So I had to dig afresh and turn out two grooves, if I may so say, to receive the arms; and then I laid him in his grave, in the very posture in which he had died, with his arms stretched above his head, and so covered him over.

This miserable and sad duty discharged, I

walked languidly towards the hillock, meaning to rest on top of it, where I should command the sea. Having reached the summit, I threw myself down and ran my eye over the sea; but though there had been a ship a mile off in the south or west, I believe I should not have seen her, owing to the confusing light of the moon and the play of the swell, that perplexed the eye with alternations of radiance and shadow. I carefully looked along the horizon, but could see nothing but the sea and the stars in the north and east, and the flashing moonlight in the other quarters. Here I sat for hard upon half an hour, when, feeling drowsy, and afraid of falling asleep, which would have been a bad thing for me in the heavy dew, I got up and walked across the top of the little hill, as far as the incline that faced in the direction of the well.

Whilst I stood looking towards the sea in the north, my eye was caught by an object at the bottom of the declivity close against the bushes. I could just make out, after peering a bit, that it was a human figure, and that it excitedly moved its arms, which were white. I recollected that Lady Brookes was buried in that place, and I frankly confess that for a moment or two I was possessed by a weak and idle consternation, and stared like a fascinated man. But unless it were a ghost, it must be one

of our people, so putting my hand to the side of my mouth I called out, "Who is that there?"

No answer being returned, I called again, and went down the hill.

"It is I, Walton," said a voice that I recognized as Sir Mordaunt's.

I hastened forward, and found my poor friend on his knees beside his wife's grave.

"I could not rest without offering up a prayer over her," said he.

"But for God's sake take care of your own health," said I. "The dew falls like rain, and you are in your shirt-sleeves."

He repeated that he could not rest until he had prayed over her.

"But we can hold a service to-morrow," I exclaimed. "We have a Prayer-book."

"Ay," said he; "but think of her lying in this unconsecrated grave. Don't reproach me, Walton. She was very dear to me. I have lost her for ever."

I grasped his hand and pressed it, meaning by that silent token to let him know there was no reproach, but rather the deepest pity and sorrow, in my heart. Nevertheless, I would not let him go until I had made him rise, and then, when he was on his feet, I gradually led him towards the hut;

for, not to speak only of the danger to which he exposed himself by remaining half-clothed in the damp night air, there was something in his manner that made me resolute to get him away from the grave.

I said again that we would hold a service over his wife's remains in the morning, and then I inquired how he had found out where she lay buried.

He answered that he had asked Norie, when I was at work on the beach, and he had told him. He then wished to know if it was possible to preserve her body, so that, should we ever get away from the island, he might be able to have her remains conveyed to England. To soothe him, I said there was wood enough to build a coffin, which we would set about after we had completed a certain project that I would explain the meaning of in the morning. And so I got him to the hut and made him lie down, and went to the door and stood there awhile.

I could not hear the women, but the deep breathing of Norie and the weary seamen made a moving sound, and, combined with the moan of the chafing sea, affected me in a manner I cannot express. I could trace the outlines of their bodies upon the white sail, and they lay as still as ever did that dead sailor I had buried.

My mind went to the women then, and I thought of Ada Tuke lying in her damp clothes, and the poor widow who in a few brief days had gauged the very lowest depths of human distress, and the girl whose life I had under God been the means of preserving. Great heaven! What a bitter weary watch was that I kept! What a panorama of wild ocean scenes and desolate death was my mind!

When I believed that Sir Mordaunt was asleep I fell on my knees, and lifting up my face, prayed with an anguish of soul I shall never forget in this life that help might come to us, and that we might not be left to perish miserably on this lonely, unfruitful, and wave-beaten rock. So passed the time until I believed my three hours expired. I then went softly into the hut, but had to gently feel over the bodies of the sleepers before I could distinguish Tripshore. I shook him, and he started up, on which I instantly spoke to him, that he might recollect himself, and went into the moonlight where he could see me; and then telling him what I had done, and bidding him keep a look-out for ships, and to seek for any wreckage that might be serviceable to us on the beach, I laid myself down in his place, and fell into a deep and dreamless sleep.

CHAPTER VII.

I AWOKE very much refreshed, and found the sunshine pouring strongly into the hut, and myself alone. I got up and went out, and saw Sir Mordaunt leaning against one of the trees to the right of the hut, watching the rest of the party, who were variously employed about the beach. We shook hands warmly, and I asked him how he did. He told me that he had slept well and felt heartier, and he certainly looked so.

I judged by the sun that the morning was not far advanced, for which I was very thankful, as there was a great deal to be done that day. The first thing that took my eye was a fire burning at the foot of the little hill facing the sea. A number of pieces of rock had been piled into a square, and the fire made up in it. There was a quantity of brushwood in heaps near the fire, and Norie, coming at that moment with a bundle of the wood, and flinging it down, made me see how he was employing himself. The smoke of the fire went up in a straight line, for there was not a breath of air. The sea lay like oil slowly waving. It was of a most deep and beautiful blue beyond the reef, though the

cloudless sky was a light silvery azure. The water broke in long flashing ripples on the reef, and rolled up the beach in little breakers.

Tripshore and Hunter were busy among a quantity of wreckage, a good portion of which had been collected whilst I was asleep. About a stone's throw from where I stood were Mrs. Stretton and Ada Tuke, the former kneeling, but what doing I could not perceive. Beyond them was Carey, spreading some wearing apparel in the sun.

Having exchanged a few words with Sir Mordaunt I walked over to the ladies, and then saw what they were about. A deck-plank lay upon the sand, and upon it Mrs. Stretton was chopping up some beef-fat out of the cask. A flour-cask stood alongside, and on looking at it, I perceived it was the cask I had found during my watch. After exchanging greetings, and hearing they had slept well and felt well, I expressed my happiness that we should have found the cask of flour.

"The salt water has got to the outer portions of it," said Mrs. Stretton; "but the flour is dry in the middle. I believe by mixing both parts, and kneading them well with fresh water, we shall not notice the salt when we have baked them in cakes with this fat."

Ske kept on mincing the fat whilst she spoke,

and Miss Tuke stood by, waiting to help her to make the cakes. I was heartily pleased to see them busy, for there is no antidote like work for melancholy.

I called to Tripshore to tell me where the telescope was, and ascended the hill with it. The moment I pointed it in the quarter where the others had seen the shadow on the preceding day, I saw the land; but I could make nothing of it beyond observing that it was full twenty miles distant, and either a mere rock or else a hill on an island, the lower portions of which were invisible. I carefully searched the rest of the horizon, but could discover nothing, and came back again to the point of land. I struggled with my memory to fashion a mental picture of the Bahamas. My having studied the chart so closely on board the yacht helped me a great deal; but though I figured all the larger islands, such as Abaco, San Salvador, Eleuthera, and the islands as low as the Caicos Passage, yet I could not even faintly recall the bearings of the islets and cays. Nor indeed would it have served me had I been able to do so; for I had no idea of our latitude and longitude, and no means of determining our position. Yet in spite of this I kept on conjecturing, and wondering, and asking myself if that land could really be one of the greater and inhabited

islands, and whether in that hope it would be wise to venture for it on a raft.

But the idea of a raft recalled our project of the preceding night—a good idea, it seemed to me, and full of promise. So I shut up the glass, and joined Tripshore and Hunter, who, as I have said, were at work among the wreckage, selecting wood for the raft. As I advanced towards them I caught sight of a strange-looking object, resembling a big capsized tub, about fifty yards away in the direction of the wreck. I went to see what it was, and to my astonishment and delight found it a great turtle, weighing, as I should have supposed from the appearance of it, not less than four hundred pounds. It was on its back, and alive. I was thunderstruck at first, and then filled with joy. This, to be sure, was one of the months in which the turtle on calm moonlight nights comes up the shore, and lays its eggs in the sand. I might fairly suppose that since one was here others were about, so that the idea of our perishing for want of food need no longer haunt me.

I rejoined the men, and asked which of them had caught the turtle.

"It was me, sir," says Tripshore. "Half an hour after you had gone into the hut, I see that chap come up out o' the water. He made me look at

him by hissing. He was like a small steam-engine slowly coming along out o' the sea. I stood stock still till he was well ashore, then picks up a piece o' timber, and gets to leeward of him, and shoving the timber under him, I worked and sweated until I managed to heave him over on his back. But, Lord, the weight of him."

"He's full of soup and meat," said I, "and his shell should serve as a tank. And now my lads, what do you find handy among this raffle?"

"All that we want, sir," responded Hunter.

This was evident, for there was a great quantity of timber, and some of it in big pieces. Among the stuff were the spars I had secured overnight. The men had dragged them ashore, unbent the sails, and snugged away the running gear that had been attached to the canvas. I saw, however, that if we were to get our raft afloat after we had built it, we must construct it down in the bight of land where the water was smooth; and explaining this to the men, we set to work to convey the material to that place. This took us an hour; but at the end of that time we had lashed and nailed three large pieces of timber into the form of a triangle for the foundations of the raft, and we had got this afloat in the smooth water, when Norie shouted to us that the cakes were baked.

We thereupon quitted our work, and after cooling our faces in the salt water, we walked to the hut, where we found the rest of the party waiting for us to come.

There stood eight brown cakes, smelling very good indeed, upon a plank. I opened two tins of meat, and divided the contents. We then poured some sherry into the water in the kettle, and breakfast was ready. But first Sir Mordaunt asked us to join him in a prayer, which was the wish of us all; so we knelt, whilst he prayed aloud, putting up such a petition as I need not repeat the language of, though any man who can imagine himself in our situation will understand its character.

This done, we fell to our repast, the dog getting his bit of salt meat as usual. I praised the cakes highly. To be sure they were a bit salt, but not disagreeably so.

"Pity some 'baccy don't come ashore, sir," said Tripshore, with a languishing look at the sea.

That was my want too. One of the hardships of those hard times was the being without tobacco. I sat next to Sir Mordaunt, and whilst we were breakfasting he asked me what scheme I and the seamen were carrying out. I told him what our idea was, and he and the others seemed greatly struck by it.

"It's a fine notion," said Norie. "There's every chance of the raft being sighted. Can you carve letters upon wood, Walton?"

"I have never tried," said I. "But I dare say I can."

"Let me have that job," he exclaimed. "I can carve letters very well. Tell me what to say, and after breakfast I'll set to work."

I proposed an inscription, and asked if it would do. There was a short debate, but nobody seemed able to improve upon it, and so my suggestion was adopted. Norie drew a pencil from his pocket, and scribbled down the words on the deck-plank. I then in a low voice told Sir Mordaunt that we meant to lash a dead body to the raft, and explained our reason. The idea shocked him just as it had shocked me, but his judgment promptly appreciated the value of the scheme.

"We'll say nothing to the women about that part," said I. "They must be drawn aside whilst we make the body fast."

"But they will see it as the raft floats away," said he.

"Why, perhaps they will," I answered; "but distance will soften the horror."

Here Tripshore jumped up. "Me and Tom's all

ready, sir." I rose too, but the baronet put his hand on my arm.

"Pray let us have the service we spoke of," he exclaimed, with a most imploring face.

I could not resist his appeal, precious as the time was. Turning to the men, I said—

"Sir Mordaunt wishes us to join him in a funeral service over poor Lady Brookes' remains. We owe it to her memory, my lads, and to our affection for the kind and large-hearted gentleman whose loss is the cruellest a man can bear."

Tripshore looked willing at once; but Hunter, a rough-fibred man, seemed impatient, though he said nothing. I took up Carey's Prayer-book, of which the print was not illegible, though parts of it were a good deal smeared through the soaking salt water, and giving the baronet my arm, we stepped into the sunshine, followed by the others, and walked to the place where Lady Brookes lay buried. The sand was heaped where the body was, which enabled us to form a circle round the grave. Sir Mordaunt read the service himself. He pronounced the words firmly, but with a most affecting spirit of devotion omitting certain solemn parts, which would have been superfluous under the circumstances. I feared he would have broken down before he got to the end, but he struggled on manfully, though several

times, when he raised his face, I saw the tears on his cheeks. I cannot conceive a more pathetic figure than he made. Bare-headed, in his shirt-sleeves, his long beard accentuating his haggard features, his humid eyes, his hands grasping the Prayer-book often thrown up in an imploring gesture when he removed his gaze from the page to fix it upon the bright blue sky—I say it would have melted an iron heart to have seen him. And into this service there entered an element—of horror shall I call it? —that would be absent from the usual ceremony. I mean we could not think of the poor body lying at our feet without reflecting that there she was, dressed as in life, uncoffined, separated from us by a thin layer of sand, such as a breeze of wind might easily scatter, and leave her exposed in her dreadful lonesomeness. When I remembered her terrors, the fright the thunder-storm had caused her, her swooning away because she had not the nerve to hear of the sufferings of a fellow-creature—one of her own sex too—had endured, I thought, "Great God! could she but see herself now!"

When the service was over, the two seamen and I went back to the raft, leaving the baronet and the women at the grave, and Norie to carve the letters and mind the fire, which I told him to feed with damp stuff, to raise a thick smoke.

I have said that we had already laid the foundations of the raft in the form of a triangle. I recommended this shape because it gave a kind of bows to the raft, and I believed that by affixing a broad plank of wood as an immovable rudder at the broad end, the thing would blow along steadily. We had plenty of nails and spikes, and the frame of the raft being afloat, we soon decked it. Of course the work was extravagantly rough, but that we cared nothing about, providing we made it strong enough to hold. The raft being completed, we set to work to rig her. We took the yacht's fore-top-gallant yard and securely nailed to it the best and lightest piece of stuff we could come at to serve as a yard. To this we bent the top-gallant sail, and all three of us buckling to it, stepped the yard that was to serve as a mast into a crevice in the middle of the raft, where we securely wedged, and then stayed it.

Although this description may run glibly, the job was a hard one, because our tools were few, and little to the purpose. The morning passed quickly whilst we were at work, and in the middle of it a pleasant breeze sprang up in the north-west, and kept the sea shivering as though the sunlight flashed in a mighty field of diamonds. It carried the smoke of the fire across the water in steel-blue coils, which

looked to be leagues long, and which I was for ever breaking off my work to glance at.

We had scarcely set the mast up on the raft and secured it, when Norie, accompanied by Miss Tuke, came down to us, carrying a piece of deck-plank.

"Here's the inscription," said he, looking well pleased with his work; and he put the board down on the sand, that we might see it. The letters were bold, well cut, and each as long as my thumb. The inscription ran thus:

JULY—, 18—. "LADY MAUD" WRECKED ON A BAHAMA CAY. EIGHT SURVIVORS. SAVE US.

There were a great many letters in this, and I was astonished at the rapidity and accuracy with which they had been carved.

"It would have taken me two days," I said, "and then perhaps no one would be able to read it."

I gave the board to Tripshore, who nailed it at the masthead by standing on Hunter's shoulders.

"Why couldn't you build a raft big enough to carry us all away, Mr. Walton?" said Miss Tuke.

"We mustn't venture it yet," I replied. "Nothing but the certainty of perishing here should make us face the peril of going afloat on a raft."

"But is it likely," said she, "that we should be on the water long without meeting a ship?"

"Ah!" I replied, "if I could foretell that, I should know what to do."

"We cannot go on stopping here," she exclaimed piteously, clasping her hands.

"No; and we don't intend to stop," said I. "Look at the noble signal that smoke is making as it stretches across the ocean. Who knows but that at this very moment it may be seen, and help coming? And see that message," I added, pointing to the board the men were affixing to the masthead of the raft, "which will shortly be afloat, and which, for all we can tell, may be the means of delivering us from this island before another day is passed. Don't lose heart," said I, tenderly, taking her hand and looking earnestly at her. "Your courage has been our mainstay all through. Don't fail us when we most want you."

She coloured up a little and averted her face, but made no reply. I beckoned to Norie, and, drawing him aside, told him in a few words what we were about to do, and begged him to go to Sir Mordaunt and ask him to draw the women into the hut, or keep them apart from us and out of sight until we had done. He walked off, and in a minute or two Sir Mordaunt called Miss Tuke, who left us. Presently I saw the baronet, leaning on his niece's arm, and accompanied by Mrs. Stretton and Carey,

move slowly towards the interior of the island, as if he had a mind to see the place; and the moment they disappeared we set to work.

The rigidity of the body I had buried on the preceding night determined me not to disturb it. I explained this to the seamen, and Tripshore said he believed that poor Jim Wilkinson would make the best body for our purpose. The two corpses had been buried above high-water mark, and the places where they lay were distinguishable by the appearance of the sand there. But the men could not remember in which of the graves Wilkinson's body was, and therefore we had to clear away the sand to find it out.

Every nerve, every fibre in my body seemed to shrivel and shrink up at the bare contemplation of exposing the poor fellows' remains, but I would not suffer my inward loathing and horror to master me. I was persuaded that the raft, if sighted, would serve our purpose more effectually if it carried a dead body than if it went bare; and the needs of eight human lives in dire peril, and without any prospect of preservation if help was not summoned, determined me to persevere in our scheme.

Tripshore was deadly pale, and worked with a dogged resolution, as if, like me, he would not permit his feelings to master him. Hunter showed no

emotion at all. Happily, the first grave we uncovered contained Wilkinson's body. We raised it, and dusted the sand from its face, and carried it to the raft. I should have been willing to let it lie on its back, with a piece of canvas over its face; but Hunter, with whom this scheme had originated, said—

"No, no, sir; let's do the job thoroughly. He must be fixed sitting upright, and then they'll think him alive, and bear down. If they see him on his back, they'll say, 'Oh, he's dead,' and sail away."

I could not deny that he was right, so we sat the body up with its back to the mast, and lashed it in that posture; but so dreadful an object did it look, that I was oppressed with a deadly giddiness and sickness after we had completed the loathsome business, and had to sit for a while and keep my eyes closed.

Nothing now remained to be done but to make the clues of the sail fast and send the raft adrift. The first was easy enough, but the other very difficult, for, calm as it was, the ground swell betwixt the beach and the reef was tolerably heavy, and would quickly drive the raft ashore and strand her if we did not mind. To guard against this, we carried a line round the mast, keeping both ends in our hands, and arming ourselves with pieces of

timber to shove her clear, we scrambled across the limb of land, and reached the extreme point of it, where we hauled upon the line and brought the raft abreast. Then, unreeving the line, we went into the water as high as our waists, and by dint of shoving got the raft clear, when her sail at once caught the wind and away she crawled, dead to leeward, but very steadily, the long rudder-like board astern of her heading her perfectly straight, and the dead body sitting in the shadow of the sail like a living man.

We scrambled back again to the beach, and mounted the hill to watch her, Norie joining us, and bringing the telescope with him. Sir Mordaunt and the women were coming slowly along from the west side of the island, but observing me to motion and point, they hurried their pace; but before they reached the hut they stopped and stood looking at the raft, that would be visible to them from that point. I saw Miss Tuke turn to her uncle, and then point to us and then at the raft, clearly astonished at the sight of the man on board, and wondering who it could be. Norie, before joining us, had hove a quantity of damp brushwood on to the fire, that sent up a dense column of smoke that arched over into a beautiful bend when it reached a short height, and went blowing along the sea, casting a long black

shadow upon the water, in the very middle of which the raft crawled steadily forward, like a cart going along a straight road. The shadow on her made her an extraordinarily clear figure against the blue water and the sky of the horizon. I was sure that no ship, keeping anything like a good look-out, could miss her; and as she went further and further away, and became smaller upon the flashing waters of the south-east, I felt a new stirring of life in me: hope grew buoyant, and for a little time at least I was more light-hearted than I had been, ay, ever since that gale had burst upon the *Lady Maud*, and driven us in darkness into these dangerous waters.

The three of us who had built that raft stood watching her until she was a mere speck in the wake of the smoke. Then muttering an earnest prayer to God that she might effect our purpose, I went down the hill, the seamen following me.

Catching sight of the turtle as I walked, I told Hunter to kill it: first, because I knew it is a cruel thing to keep those animals long on their back; and secondly, because its meat would save the other provisions, and be a relish for us, who, Heaven knows, stood in need of any comfort in that way that we could come at. I was in no mood to watch him destroy the creature, so I walked over to the trees under whose shadow Sir Mordaunt and the others

were resting themselves. On my drawing near, Miss Tuke asked me eagerly who the person was that had gone away in the raft. I was obliged to tell her, but I did so with reluctance and a kind of shame.

"Was he *dead?*" she exclaimed, in a thrilling whisper, and grasping Mrs. Stretton's hand.

I exactly explained our motive, but the shocked expression lingered long in her face.

I was worn out and overcome with the heat, and threw myself down upon the grass. Seeing my exhaustion, Mrs. Stretton filled a shell with sherry and water, and I swallowed the draught gratefully. She then came and sat by my side. I had had little to say to her since we had been cast ashore, and small leisure to observe her closely. She had removed her hat, one that Miss Tuke had given her, and which the sea had soaked without tearing from her head—I say, she had removed her hat when under the trees, and her thick, black, beautiful hair had come away from its fastenings, and hung about her in a manner that gave a peculiar power and a wild kind of spirit to her dark, handsome, and uncommon face.

"You bear your sufferings with admirable courage," said I. "Hard as our plight is, your trials have been so heavily in excess of ours, that I can

only admire and wonder at your fortitude and patience."

"It will not do to look back," she answered. "We might humbly wish that God's hand had fallen less heavily upon your poor friend, Mr. Walton."

"I hope," said I—we spoke in a low voice that could not be overheard—"that Miss Tuke does not think me wicked in helping to send a poor dead man in quest of succour. Heaven knows, whatever I have done, I have done for the best."

"Oh, be sure we all believe that," said she, with a note of rich and tender gratitude in her voice. And after a short silence, she asked, "Do you think we shall ever get away from this island?"

"Yes," I replied; for whether I thought so or not, the proper answer to her question was yes.

"Sir Mordaunt frets cruelly over his wife," she continued. "It is breaking his heart, I believe, to think of her lying in the sand there in the condition in which she was buried. He told me you had promised to get the men to make a coffin for her. Cannot that be done?"

"Yes," said I. "I had forgotten. After dinner it shall be done. And by the look of the sun, it seems about time that we got our midday meal. How many cakes did you bake?"

"Enough for dinner and supper," she replied.

"Then let us get dinner now," said I; for by this time Hunter had done his business with the turtle, and with the help of Tripshore had dragged the great creature up to the hut.

As there was nothing else cooked but the meat in the tins, we had some of that; but in order to save the slender stock, I asked Mrs. Stretton and Miss Tuke to devote themselves that afternoon to boiling some of the salt beef in the kettle—the only cooking utensil we possessed—and I likewise requested Norie to cut up the turtle for salting and drying. I then in a low voice told Sir Mordaunt that I had not forgotten my promise, and that I would set to work after dinner to build a coffin for his wife's remains. He pressed my hand in silence.

It was a bitter thing to look at our miserable repast, and round upon our rude hut, and recall the *Lady Maud's* sumptuous cabin and plentiful good fare. Only a painter could give you any idea of the interior the hut presented, and of our appearance as we sat or stood, eating with our fingers. No one who has not suffered in that way can imagine what it is for the civilized instincts to find themselves abruptly and helplessly plunged into a state of pure barbarism. The women used the knives when eating, and managed with less discomfort now that they had the little cakes as platters for their portions of

preserved meat; but we males had to eat like monkeys, that is, there was nothing for it but to use our fingers for forks, and to Sir Mordaunt, who was a most fastidious man in his habits, this trifling hardship was a sterner grievance than the being without a bed, or the having no coat nor hat to cover him.

We made in that hut a complete picture of a shipwrecked party. Sir Mordaunt, as I say, was without coat or hat; I was in my bare feet; Norie had not yet manufactured the extraordinary cap from a piece of canvas that he afterwards wore. Though the sun had dried our clothes, yet the salt water had given them a most beggarly aspect, more especially the women's. Then, as we had built the hut among the trees, we had the trunks of some of them standing among us and crowding the interior. Happily the grass made the ground a soft lodging; but taken altogether, the sail as a carpet, the yacht's timbers nailed roughly to the trees, the trees in the midst of the hut, coupled with our melancholy figures, one lying, another standing, a third squatting, produced one of the wildest and most striking pictures that can be conceived.

"I wonder," says Norie, filling the shell with water from the kettle, and eyeing it with an air of rueful wonder, "I wonder," says he, "if such a calamity as this ever befell a yachting party before."

"It may well have happened," said I.

"And it may happen again, sir," said Tripshore.

"If ever our misfortunes come to be known," exclaimed Sir Mordaunt, "they should make yacht-owners who undertake long cruises very cautious in their selection of skippers. And yet, Walton, as you know, I had the fullest confidence in Purchase. I never for a moment doubted that he was a first-rate navigator."

Tripshore looked at me.

"How long will it take the raft to get into the track of ships?" asked Miss Tuke.

This question started us on a new conjecture; but it was quite impossible to arrive at any conclusion, simply because we had no notion in what part of the Bahamas this island lay.

"If only the chart of these islands had been washed ashore," said I, "we should be able to form some idea how far distant the nearest inhabited land is by giving this rock a theoretical position. The only islands I can remember as inhabited are New Providence, Abaco, Andros, and Inagua. Of course there are others, but my memory does not carry them. Yet even the islands I name run from the high north away south as far as the Windward Passage; consequently this cay cannot be very far from

one of them. But how does that one bear? How far is it? How are we to reach it?"

"That's it, sir," answered Hunter. "If them questions could be answered, there'd be no call to worrit ourselves long."

"Suppose a ship sights the raft, what will she do?" asked Mrs. Stretton.

"Why, mum," replied Tripshore, "if her skipper has eddication enough to read the board, and has a mind to help us, he'll carry the board along with him to the port he puts into, and give information there, and a wessel will be sent to look for us. Or if he's bound on a long woyage, then I suppose he'd speak the first ship he met, and give her the news, who'd report the wreck on her arrival. That would be about it, sir, I think?" said he to me.

I answered yes, though if a government ship encountered the raft, she would probably start in quest of us at once. "But," said I, in a hopeful voice, "be the vessel that sights the raft what she will, help is sure to come;" and so speaking, I went out of the hut, calling to Tripshore and Hunter to follow me.

When I had them alone, I explained Sir Mordaunt's wish; and fancying that Hunter hung back from the job, as one that seemed to him of a sentimental kind and not to refer to our present

needs, nor to our prospects, I added that the baronet was sure to gratefully remember their action in this matter should we come to be rescued, and that they knew he was rich enough to make his gratitude a thing worth earning.

Tripshore stood in no need of an incentive of this kind, but it put a heartiness into Hunter, who said "he was always agreeable to turn to and oblige people, more 'specially when they was his boss, as he still reckoned Sir Mordaunt to be; though he believed that when sailors was cast away, as we was, the law left it to their own hoption whether they should continue as men, or be their own masters."

It was a dreadfully dismal job for persons in our situation to fall to. Nothing but my affection for, and my sympathy with, Sir Mordaunt could have induced me to take a part in such work. We managed it by collecting a quantity of deck planks, and nailing them together into a kind of long box. We worked close beside the grave, in the shadow of the hill. Indeed, out of that shadow we should not have been able to lift our hands, for the sun was fierce enough to roast us alive, and the gay wind that was blowing did not in the least degree qualify that scorching and blinding effulgence. In this tropical fiery splendour the coral sand tortured

the eye that rested even an instant upon its glaring surface, whilst the sea in the south was a great tremulous blaze that seemed to fill the whole of that quarter with a fog of silver-white glory, so that the horizon all that way was as completely shut out as if a body of vapour had rolled down over it. Nevertheless, we worked very steadily; and, indeed, there was not much to be done, seeing that we did not stop to make the coffin sightly, but just nailed the boards roughly together, so that the poor remains could lie in the sand in a condition to be removed whenever the time arrived.

None of the others came near us. Norie tended the fire, but stopped short at that point. They all knew what we were doing, that we were engaged upon a solemn and dreadful task not proper to intrude on.

I dare say we were an hour and a half in making that coffin, such as it was; but when it was finished, the worst part remained. If it had been a hard trial to me to exhume the sailor's corpse, I know no words to express my horror at having to lift up Lady Brookes' body from the sand. Yet I dared not say I would not help the men, lest they should turn and refuse to go on.

No doubt I made more of it than I should under other circumstances. My nerves were unstrung by

the trials and scenes and hardships we had gone through. Though I had been rendered somewhat buoyant in spirits by the raft going adrift, yet it was no more than a little fickle gleam of the sunshine of hope on my mind. It was clouded again, and my heart dark. Besides, it was a mighty trial to look upon a human face coming blindly up out of the sand—a face whose lineaments would reflect the horror that they excited in the imagination. Above all, was it a mighty trial to look upon a face I had known in life, whose lustrous eyes had often met mine, whose voice I seemed to hear if I did but strain my fancy—to look, I say, upon that familiar face appearing amid the sand, as the seamen carefully scratched about with their hands, disclosing first one part and then another of the body, until, my God! she lay there, a fully-dressed woman, with her eyes blind with sand, and her hands by her side, and the rings sparkling upon her fingers!

I asked Hunter to remove the rings. He pulled, but they would not come away.

"No matter," said I. "Lift her gently, men, and lay her in the coffin."

This was done, and the coffin boarded up. We all three then went to work to deepen the grave, and having buried the coffin, left the dismal place.

This job had heavily depressed me. We were

red-hot with the heat and the toil, and went for a drink; but in compliance with my wish, Miss Tuke and Mrs. Stretton had taken the kettle to boil some salt beef, and so to slake our thirst we had to walk across the island in the broiling sun to the well. This was very annoying, yet excepting that kettle, we had nothing in which we could store water.*

As we went to the well, I told Hunter to go to work presently, and clean the flesh out of the shell of the turtle, and then the shell would serve us for a tank. It was too great a tax, I said, to be obliged to cross the island every time we wanted a drink.

After reaching the well and quenching our thirst, we stood awhile looking away into the sea in the north. This side of the island was very flat, and yielded us but a narrow horizon. I saw the white ribs of a reef glancing in the dark blue water about a mile away in the north-west, and beyond that was a shadow upon the sea that looked like the eddies formed by a tide running over the shallow surface of another reef.

"Can we be among the shoals to the westward of Long Island?" said I, remembering on a sudden

* We had the beef cask, but it was full of meat, and we dared not remove the junk from the brine in the cask, lest it should putrefy. We also had the sherry cask, but at that time we thought the wine too precious to let run.

the swarm of little cays and reefs marked upon the chart over against that piece of land. "If so," I added, with a feeling of despair in me that I could not check, "I can't see how on earth we are to be rescued unless we make shift to get away on a raft, and leave the rest to Providence. No vessel is likely to come near these waters. The proper channels will be leagues away on either side."

"The water looks open enough out yonder," replied Tripshore, pointing into the north-east. "If we be in the midst of them shoals you speak of, they'd be showing all around."

"What part of these cussed islands we're castaway on, I don't know," said Hunter. "But whatever may be your detarmination, Mr. Walton, mine's this: I'm not going to sit down on this here rock and wait for something to happen. I don't say nothen 'll come of that there raft we sent adrift this morning; but meanwhiles there's wood enough left to build a machine that'll float two men. I'm agreeable to go to work upon it, and when it's built, if no one else 'll join, then, if you'll give me three days' allowance o' wittles, I'll put off alone and see what's to be found. Ye'll be discovering soon that it'll be better to take your chance o' drowning than stopping here."

"I don't see my way to that——" said I.

"But I do," he interrupted.

"Because," I continued, determined not to notice the man's mutinous manner, "we cannot construct a raft that will not be absolutely at the mercy of the wind. If we could reckon upon a north or an east wind blowing steadily for a week or so, then, indeed, our raft might drift to some inhabited shore. But the chances are almost all against us. The first bit of sea that got up would sweep us off the raft like chaff. Or we might be blown into the Atlantic without sighting a vessel, and wretchedly perish there."

"But what's to be done, then?" he asked fiercely. "Are we to stick here till we rot?"

"We must wait a little," I answered. "Give that raft we have sent adrift a chance. Or that smoke we are making may be seen. Some safer means of escape than a raft may offer. If nothing turns up, then we must come to your remedy."

He muttered something under his breath, turned on his heels, and walked off, and he sullenly kept in advance of us the whole way across the island.

As we rounded the bushes which brought us within view of the place where Lady Brookes lay buried, I saw Sir Mordaunt at work upon the grave. I left Tripshore and went to him, and on drawing near I perceived that he was framing the grave with

pieces of rock. He took my hand in both his and pressed it affectionately, and thanked me for having carried out his wishes. I asked him how he knew we had completed the task, as no one had approached us whilst we were at work.

"Norie," said he, "caught sight of you lowering the coffin, and came and told me."

"That is hard work for you," said I, pointing to the pieces of rock he had collected.

"I wish to know where she lies," he answered. "The wind and rain would soon level a mound of sand, but these stones will remain; and I have asked Norie to nail two pieces of wood into the shape of a cross, and carve her name upon it, and the date of her death, and then we will set up the cross securely at the head there."

It was an affecting thing to see him at this work. I thought he looked ill and worn, and his attire, and long beard, and humid eyes, and his slow movements, all combined to make the picture a pathetic one. I stood in silence, wondering at the tenderness of this gentleman for the memory of a woman whose character in life was even less lovable than I have thought right to describe it; and at the unselfishness of his nature, that left him heart enough, in the midst of our distress, hardships, and anxiety, to do all the honour that love could suggest

to the poor creature who lay under the sand. To me, I own, all this seemed an idle duty. Had our escape been sure, no matter how long delayed, I might have understood the baronet's anxiety to preserve his wife's remains, that they could be removed hereafter. But, so far as we then knew, we ourselves were as people in the very valley of the shadow of death. One by one we might drop away before help reached us, if ever help should come; and the state of mind which these thoughts induced made me behold but little of worth in the devoted memory that was influencing Sir Mordaunt.

However, I had the decency to keep my ideas to myself, nor at such a moment at least would I intrude upon him the fears which at that time oppressed me. I told him, if he would leave the building of the grave to me, I would take care it was properly done, and the cross firmly erected. It was not fit work for him, I said.

"No, no!" he exclaimed. "This is my share. I could not assist in the other part. I had not courage even to approach and watch you. But this is strictly my duty—my religious duty. Do not offer to help me, Walton. It will soothe me to look back and recall this labour."

As this was his wish, I said no more, and went to the hut to rest a while. I noticed Hunter on

the beach, standing near the remains of the wreckage there, and looking about him, as I supposed, to see if anything more had come ashore. Norie was helping Mrs. Stretton to cook the beef and keep the fire going; but I presumed they had not been there long, and that they would not stop there long, for the heat of the sun and the fire together was not to be borne. Under the trees, and to the right of the hut, was Tripshore, operating upon the turtle, Carey looking on. I had given this job to Hunter, but it did not signify who performed it, and if Hunter was searching the beach he was well employed.

Inside the hut I found Miss Tuke kneeling on the sail, making cakes. Her sleeves were rolled above her elbows, her hair was rough, yet I never admired her more than I did then, and I thought it impossible that any posture should suit her better. I sat down near the plank on which she was moulding the cakes, and told her what we had been doing, and how I had left her uncle employed.

"He thinks of nothing else," she answered, mournfully. "He seems to forget that we are shipwrecked, and may never escape from this dreadful island."

"On the contrary," said I, "he is acting precisely as a man would who firmly believes that we shall escape. He begged me to make the coffin, and is

himself making the grave, in the full conviction that he will come or send for his wife's remains for burial in England."

"But *how* are we to get away?" said she, pausing in her work, and looking me full in the face.

I could only repeat what I had said before—that we must hope the smoke of the fire would be seen, or the raft with our message upon it encountered.

"It will not take us long to burn all the bushes on the island," said she; "and then how shall we be able to make a fire? And how many days will you grant before supposing that the raft has disappeared without any ship having seen it?"

"What *can* we do if we are forbidden even to hope?" I replied, tormented by these questions, which only too accurately interpreted my own feelings. "The bushes are not all burnt yet, and the raft has been gone only four or five hours. We must be patient, and have faith in God's goodness. Who knows what a day may unfold?"

She had too brave a soul to go on murmuring, yet it was clear that she understood our situation as accurately as I, and that she could not look away from the immediate present without her heart fainting in her.

"If the worst comes to pass," said I; "if, after

waiting, we see no prospect of relief; then, before our food fails us, we must turn to and pull this hut down, and make as big and strong a raft as we can manage. But that alternative, as I have told the others, is so full of danger, that before adopting it our extremity should be greater than it is, and our patience all gone."

As I said this, Hunter put his head into the hut, and said there was a wooden case come ashore. It was too large for him to carry alone. He wanted to know where Tripshore was.

"I'll give you a hand," said I, jumping up; and I followed him to the beach.

It was a large, white wood square box, and glanced among the ripples which rolled up the beach. It lay close to where we had launched the raft. We waded into the water, and hoisted it out of the sand, and conveyed it to the hut, where we prized open the lid, and came to a casing of tin. This we cut, and found the case full of biscuits, which had been perfectly protected from the water by the tin casing.

I called to Miss Tuke to come and look, and told her that every discovery of this kind improved our chances of escape, by enabling us to give the raft more time to do its work.

"I for one shan't stop for that, Mr. Walton!" ex-

claimed Hunter. "I've been overhauling that wreckage down there, and there's stuff enough for my purpose."

"What do you mean to do?" I asked.

"Build a kind of catamaran," he replied, "and take my chance alone, if nobody 'll come with me."

"You can do as you please," said I, noticing the obstinate look in the man's face; "nobody will stop you. You're a sailor, and don't require any one to point out the risks you'll run."

Just then Mrs. Stretton and Norie arrived, the latter sweating under the kettle, that was full of salt meat, from which the steam was soaring in clouds. Tripshore, hearing our voices, also came round to where we stood, and listened, with the gleaming knife with which he was operating on the turtle forking out of his hand.

"All hands being here, saving Sir Mordaunt," said Hunter, folding his arms and looking around him, "I'll put my case. Here we are, imprisoned on a island. Where it is, no one knows. Two blessed days we've been here, and ne'er a sail have we seen. My belief is, that if we was to stop here twelve months, we'd see nothen go by. What have we got to wait for, then? The raft that's gone adrift *may* do some good—I was willin' enough to lend a hand to build it—but it may come to nothen;

and are we goin' to keep all on waiting, when, maybe, that raft's gone to pieces? What I'm goin' to do is to build a sort of houtrigging machine as 'll not capsize, and light enough for a man to shove along. If nobody 'll come in it, I'll go alone. If I'm picked up, good; the wessel as picks me up 'll come for the others; and if I'm washed overboard and drowned, well, I'd as lief rot in the sea as rot here."

"Let him do it," cried Norie, eagerly, looking at me. "It's a chance, at all events."

"Hunter is his own master," I replied. "He knows the risks, and that the odds against him are ninety-nine in the hundred."

"Damn the odds!" shouted the man, angrily. "What are the odds here? They're *all* agin us. You know that, Mr. Walton." Turning to Tripshore, he said, "Will you give me a hand to build the thing I want?"

"Ay," said the other, "I'll give you a hand, Tom; but it'll be helping you to build your coffin, my lad."

"Well, when you're ready, come," exclaimed Hunter. "There's a spell o' daylight left yet."

So saying, he walked hastily towards the wreckage, from which he had already selected a portion

of the material he required. When he was out of hearing, Miss Tuke said—

"Why are you opposed to his scheme, Mr. Walton?"

"I am not opposed to it, I am indifferent," I answered. "I should favour it if the chance of the man losing his life was not, as I believe it is, equal to a dead certainty."

"But he may sight a ship, and be the means of sending help to us," exclaimed Norie.

"Yes, he may—he may—and he mayn't!" I replied, bitterly. "If there's any good in a raft at all, then the raft we sent away this morning should answer our end. If the thing is seen, the dead messenger aboard will not appeal less forcibly than a living man. If it is not seen, there is no life to be lost, no long hours of torment to be endured."

"But something must be done—some effort must be made," said Norie, in a low voice.

"My God!" I cried, "have we been idle? What more could we have done? Tell me what to do —give me an idea. If practicable, it shall be executed to the letter. But don't force us to throw away our lives in a senseless effort to preserve them."

"Tom means to go," said Tripshore, who stood by; "and he'll have his way. Only he shouldn't

be let to use up all the nails, Mr. Walton. We may come to want 'em ourselves."

"Go you and help him, Tripshore, as you promised," said I; "but keep an eye upon the nails too, for, as you say, we may want them, though I hope not."

For here let me repeat that the idea of the eight, or, if Hunter would not stay, the seven, of us committing ourselves to the sea in such a raft as we should be able to construct, was intolerable to me. Of all marine fabrics, the raft has been the theatre of the worst sufferings. At the very best it is but a clumsy platform, at the mercy of the winds and surges. A very light sea will set it awash, so that you may reckon upon sitting up to your hips in water nearly all the time you are aboard. It needed no very vigorous imagination to conceive what our situation would be in a seaway, the water pouring in coils over the level stage, that would swing to the surges like an ill-balanced kite, our bodies soaked to the skin, our provisions washed away or spoiled. It was not to be expected that Norie and the women could realize all that was meant by the proposal to leave the island on a raft; but to me it offered itself as a dreadful alternative, and though life was as dear to me as it was to the others, I felt that it would be a wiser resolve

to stick to the island, and trust to God's mercy for a rescue, and if no succour came, then to die on dry land, than launch ourselves upon the sea in a raft, and take the risk of courting in that way all those dreadful sufferings, that protracted anguish, and that final extinction, which make some of the naval records the ghastliest and most terrible literature in the world.

CHAPTER VIII.

It was hard to tell the hour by the look of the sun, but I guessed it to be about four o'clock. I sat down on the grass near the hut, with my back against a tree, whilst Mrs. Stretton and Carey hung up the pieces of beef which had been cooked, and Miss Tuke finished her job of cake-making. The fire had waned; but though we should not let it expire, it was impossible without incessant and painful labour to keep it throwing up a heavy smoke. Only a very thin trail of smoke went up now.

I asked myself, Even should the densest smoke we could get out of the bush be seen, would its meaning be understood? Would it not be thought the smoke of a steamer? Or if guessed to come from this rock, the smoke of a fire lighted by some persons who had landed on a short visit?

These were crushing thoughts, for, as you know, we had but two chances—the smoke and the raft; and if we gave up the smoke as hopeless, we had nothing left but the raft, which might prove useless too, and what then was to be done?

My dejection was so great for a time, that a feeling of utter indifference stole over me. I thought to myself, Well, if God has deserted us, what is the good of our striving? If we are sentenced to perish here, why chafe our hearts into rags with thoughts of how to get away? Every mortal creature has his appointed time, and if ours has arrived, let us not make ten thousand deaths of it by our fears and recoilings and our madness to escape it.

The breeze that had been blowing all day had fallen somewhat, and was now a gentle wind. The sun was still high, and the water on fire under it. It seemed cruelly hard that we should have this fine weather now when it was of no use, when had it come earlier it would have saved us from this dreadful fate by enabling us to ascertain our whereabouts, and to steer the yacht accordingly. I looked at the reef where she had gone to pieces, and at the water beyond, but could see no fragment of her. There was a very slight swell rolling in from the sea, and the reef gleamed in it as the water rose and fell, and every now and again there would be

a sudden beautiful play of foam, which glistened in a hundred tints in the sunshine, like the sparkling of light in trembling dewdrops.

All the while I looked I was saying to myself, "In what part of the Bahamas is this island? What land is that visible from the hill-top there? Is it possible that no vessel ever traverses those leagues of dark blue sea away yonder, near enough for her people to see our signal, or for us to spy her canvas or the smoke from her funnel?" In this age, when all the oceans are crowded with shipping, it seemed scarcely conceivable that our fate should have thrown us upon an island in unnavigable waters. Remembering my passing mood at that time, I can understand those fits of sullenness and of ferocity which have possessed the shipwrecked mariner as hope dies in his breast.

I sat watching the two seamen collecting the material for a small raft on the beach, with a dull, unconcerned eye. I had never felt so hopeless before; but, thank God, the depression was but transient.

I had been resting and musing in this way for some time, when Sir Mordaunt came from his wife's grave, where he had been toiling since we had buried the coffin. His appearance it was that rallied me, by making me feel ashamed of the

selfish character of my despair in the face of such an affliction as had come upon him. He walked very slowly, and showed many symptoms of great physical distress. I met him, and gave him my arm. He leaned upon me wearily, but said nothing until he had seated himself.

"Have you finished your task?" said I.

"Yes," he replied. "I can do no more. I have covered the grave with stones, and to-morrow, I trust, Norie will have completed the cross he promised to make and inscribe. I knew the labour would soothe me, Walton. Now that I have marked her resting-place with my own hands, my mind is calmer than it was."

"I hope you will not expose yourself again to the sun," said I, "nor attempt any more hard work."

"Ah, I am too old for hard work," said he, with a sad smile, laying his hand on mine. "And surely, Walton, shipwreck ages a man's heart terribly. Who could have imagined that our cruise would end in this way? Yet you all seem to bear up well. Where are the others? Where is Ada?"

"In the hut, with Norie. The other women will, I expect, be at work on the turtle."

"And what is Tripshore about?"

I explained, believing that he would take my view of Hunter's scheme; but instead, he exclaimed,

"Why, the man is a brave fellow to venture it. Do you say he will go alone?"

"Who would accompany him?"

"Yes, indeed; but that leaves him so much the braver. Do you know, he may fall in with a vessel, or manage to reach some inhabited coast. It will help our chance, Walton."

He was eager and restless on a sudden. He looked with animated eyes across the sea, and clasped and unlocked his hands.

"Yes," he repeated, "it will help our chances. Life is still precious, Walton. It would be a dreadful thing to die on this island—no living creature left to tell the world what has become of us. Some effort must be made."

I knew that as well as he. However, it would have been cruel to extinguish the hope, and, I may say, the new spirit which my explanation of Hunter's scheme had kindled in him, by representing its idleness. Indeed, I was heartily glad to see him waking up out of his grief, and taking an interest in our distressful position, and admitting the preciousness of life. His misery had been dangerously numbing his mind, and had he continued much longer in that mental condition, I have no doubt that he would have fallen melancholy mad. This quickening in him therefore gave me

real pleasure, and I applauded myself for my good sense in carrying out his wishes with respect to his wife's interment, and in not hindering him by officious friendship from doing his part. The mind knows its own burdens best, and how to vent itself; and certainly one way of lightening melancholy is to let it expend itself in forms of its own choosing.

After Tripshore and Hunter had been working for an hour down in the creek, whither they had carried the stuff for the raft, they came up to the hut for their supper. It was time for that meal, as we could guess more by our appetites than by the sun; and as we had a mind to treat ourselves to a change of food, we set a piece of boiled beef upon the deck-plank, and each person helped himself to a biscuit.

It was easy to see how greatly Sir Mordaunt and the others were taken by Hunter's scheme, by the way they regarded him. They eyed him as if he was a hero. Almost as soon as he presented himself, he was asked by Sir Mordaunt what progress he had made with his raft.

"Why, sir," he answered, "I hope by noon to-morrow to have put this beast of a island a long way astern."

"You have great resolution and courage," ex-

claimed Sir Mordaunt. "I pray that God may protect and guide you."

"He won't guide us here," answered Hunter, bluntly; "and protection 'll be of no use if we're not to get away. As well be drowned, I says, as become a skeleton on a island. I know this, sir—I've got nothen to do but to keep all on steering west, and I'm bound to come right."

"Wind and weather permitting," said Tripshore.

"Nothing 'll divart me," said Hunter, sullenly. "Right or wrong, when that raft's built, I'm off."

He devoured his allowance of food rapidly, wild with impatience to fall to his work again. Tripshore, noticing the general sympathy with the man's scheme, made haste to finish his supper, so that the others might not think he was reluctant to assist his mate. I kept silent, resolved to say nothing more on the subject.

As Hunter was leaving the hut, he said to me, "I suppose you'll let me have the compass, sir?"

"It is Sir Mordaunt's property," I answered.

"Certainly you may have it," exclaimed the baronet.

"Remember," said I, "should we ultimately have to betake ourselves to a raft, we shall want that compass, to know in what direction we drift."

"But what raft do ye mean to build?" inquired

Hunter. "Where's the wood? It'll be pretty nigh all used up by the time I'm done."

"There's plenty here," said I, pointing to the hut.

"Oh, I forgot that," said he.

"Let him have the compass, Walton," cried Norie.

"Yes, if he goes alone, he should be furnished with every requirement our miserable stock will yield," said Sir Mordaunt. "Hunter risks his life for us, remember, Walton."

"He knows," said I, "that my objections are not made to defeat his wishes, but to protect ourselves, and him too, for the matter of that."

The man, without answering, walked swiftly away, Tripshore following leisurely. It was not very pleasant for me to look round, and to see on the faces of our little company that they considered my timidity was trying to deprive them of a chance of escape. Yet I could not mistake their manner. I would particularly refer to Miss Tuke and Mrs. Stretton and Norie. This touched me to the quick. Was it not to my interest as much as to theirs that Hunter should venture his life, if he chose, to find us help? I objected to his enterprise because I could not endure that the man should sacrifice his life to no purpose; and also because it seemed an unmanly

thing to let him go forth alone into the great sea upon a little raft, though any one of us who had offered to accompany him would, in my opinion, have acted with criminal folly.

Depressed by the behaviour of my companions, and greatly vexed by it—for I could put my hand on my breast and say with an honest heart that I had done my best for them all, and would strive to do more if time were given me—I took the glass and walked to the hill, partly to search the sea, and partly that I might be alone.

As I passed the fire, I stopped to throw some wood upon it. It was nearly out, but the wood soon kindled, and set up a volume of smoke, the twigs and stems of the bushes being almost as dry as dead wood, whereas the leaves, being green, damped the blaze, and made a smoke like one of those burning heaps of leaves and stubble and rubbish which you have seen in fields. The sun was still very hot, but it was westering fast, and its noontide fierceness was gone. The first thing I noticed on reaching the top of the hill was Lady Brookes' grave. Sir Mordaunt must have worked very hard, and I wondered where he had found all the stones and pieces of rock he had piled upon it. He had raised them very near as high as a man's waist. There was no fear of that grave being missed, should the

baronet ever be able to send for the poor lady's remains.

I sat down on top of the hill, with my knees up in front of me, upon which I rested the telescope. The gentle wind that was blowing was very sweet, though warm, and greatly qualified the heat of the sunlight. As I gazed around me, I thought, What a little bit of an island is this! What a speck upon the mighty Atlantic, whose vast waters washed the eastern heavens, and interposed nearly four thousand miles of ocean betwixt us and home! I searched the horizon all that way, wondering, since the atmosphere was so clear, whether there would be land in sight; but I could see nothing that looked like land, nor any appearance of a vessel. All that was visible upon the water were the reefs I have before described, with here and there a shadow, that might well have passed for the reflection of a cloud, had the sky not been clear, but which I could not doubt would be a shoal.

I then brought the telescope to bear upon the south and west, and scanned those quarters very closely and narrowly. Nothing rewarded my search beyond the point of land we had before descried. I tried hard to determine its features, but it was too far off: it was not more, indeed, than a faint blue cloud in appearance.

I put the glass down, and, folding my arms, looked idly and listlessly about me, with something of that vacancy of soul that had been in me a short time before. The two men were hard at work in the creek. They had made great progress with the raft, which consisted of several planks nailed to short beams; and they had contrived a sort of box amidships, like an open companion hatchway, meant, I suppose, for Hunter to sit and paddle in. There was a certain cleverness in the form of the raft, and for fishing, or for making short excursions, or even for venturing for the distant glimpse of land, it would have been a very valuable thing on a fine smooth day; but literally to go to sea in, it looked to me as worthless as a single plank, and I was more than ever persuaded that the man would be acting like a madman to quit the island on so frail and dangerous a contrivance.

The rest of the party had come out of the hut, and were sitting under the trees, which were, I believe, stunted brasilleto. There they could see the men working, and yet be in the shade. They made a sad group for me to watch. It was a cruel situation for women to be in, more particularly for a delicate girl like Miss Tuke, who had been flung on a sudden from the luxury of a fine yacht into a state of absolute homelessness, beggary, and harsh

privation, backed and darkened by the shadow of terrible death. Grievous was it, too, to look at Mrs. Stretton, and think that we had saved her from one desperate peril, only to plunge her into an even worse form of suffering; for suffering is to be measured by time. Another day might have terminated her anguish on the wreck; but who could guess how long our present imprisonment was to last, and how much misery we should have to endure before we were visited by death or succoured by human hands?

My eyes, quitting my poor companions, wandered over the reef on which we had struck, and which from this height I could clearly see gleaming in the crystalline blue water. Only three of the bodies of the crew had come ashore, and I supposed that the others had been washed by the current away to sea. Thither also, no doubt, had gone the spars of the yacht and the other floating portions, and may be most of those stores which would have been so precious to us in our destitution. I imagined there was a trickle of tide setting to the westward now, and I was letting my eye run that way, when I caught sight of a black object in the water, about three-quarters of a mile distant from the westernmost point of the roof.

I believed at first that it was a shark, but it

looked too big for a shark. I snatched up the glass and pointed it. The instant the object entered the field of the lenses I perceived that it was a boat bottom up.

I would not credit my eyes at first, and continued looking and looking, until it was impossible for me to doubt that the object was a boat, with her keel just above the water, and portions of her bottom glancing in the delicate swell.

I was so agitated, that I trembled as though a wintry blast had struck me; my heart seemed to stop beating, and I felt as if about to faint; a cold perspiration covered my forehead; involuntarily my hands clenched themselves until my finger nails cut into the palm. I closed my eyes tight, to clear the brain, and held them closed for some moments, after which I pointed the glass and looked again; and being now quite sure, I sprang to my feet and hallooed to the men in the creek with all my might. They dropped their work, affrighted by my voice, and stared. I put my hand to my mouth and bawled, "There's a boat, bottom up, out yonder! Come up here and look at her!" And I stood pointing in so wild an attitude, that they might well have imagined I had taken leave of my senses. However, they instantly came running to the hill, and the others, who had heard my cry, came run-

ning too, all save Sir Mordaunt, who half rose, but sank back again.

Tripshore was the first to reach me. I gave him the glass, and pointed to the boat. Instantly he cried, "Ay, it's a boat! It must be the yacht's boat; her that the men launched, and that drownded them."

"What is it?" shouted Hunter, rushing up to us.

"Look, Tom! Isn't that the yacht's boat there?" exclaimed Tripshore.

He peered, and uttered a loud cry. "Yes, yes! that's her! that's the boat we launched, and that capsized with us. For the Lord's sake, Mr. Tripshore, let's go and secure her."

By this time the others had arrived, and a whole volley of questions was let fly at me. They thought it was a ship I had seen. But I had now recovered my composure; and after briefly answering their questions, and giving them the telescope, to look at the boat for themselves, I turned to Tripshore and Hunter.

"Is your raft ready to go afloat?" I asked.

"She'll swim as she is," answered Hunter, in a voice full of uncontrollable excitement.

"Will she carry you both?"

"Both?" he replied. "Ay, four of us."

"You'll want a couple of paddles," said I.

"That boat is within a mile, and by paddling you'll fetch her easily."

"A couple of planks 'll do for paddles, Tom," exclaimed Tripshore.

"Come along!" shouted the other.

"Take a tow-line with you!" I bawled after them, as they dashed down the hill.

Two were enough to launch the raft, and as they were both seamen they knew what to do. Though I had pulled myself together again, my heart beat strongly. That boat, unless damaged beyond all possibility of repair, might save our lives. If she were indeed the boat that the yacht carried amidships, then she would be big enough to receive the whole of us. And never had I seen the hand of God plainer in any circumstance than in this; for Hunter's raft, against the building of which I had put my face, lay almost ready to shove off in, so that we should be able to get the boat at once and save precious time, and be beforehand with the darkness, or with any wind that might come with the darkness.

Seeing the baronet wave his hand to us, I asked Mrs. Stretton to go to him, and tell him that the yacht's boat was there, and that the men were about to bring her in. She went at once, whilst

the rest of us stayed on the hill-top, to watch the boat and the movements of the men.

As I have said, the frame of the raft was finished, and, indeed, this was not a job that need have been long in doing, for the planks and pieces of timber were all ready there. The size of the raft was not bigger than the top of a dinner table, and there were two of them to put it together. Yet it was very nearly half an hour before they got away in the raft, in spite of Hunter having told me that she would swim as she was; the cause of the delay being they had nothing to serve them for paddles but planks, which they had to taper with the chopper at one end, in order to grasp them. In all this time, however, the boat barely drifted a hundred yards to the westward, showing the languor of the tide and its direction at that time. Yet my impatience was so great that it was a positive torture. I would not shout to the men, for I could see they were doing their best; yet it would have eased me to stand and roar, for I was mad to secure the boat, and every minute that passed seemed to my crazy anxiety like the mouldering away of our chance.

I was greatly tormented also by Norie's questions. He would ask me first one thing, then another; was miserably importunate; one moment

wringing his hands, and saying the men would lose the boat; then shouting that the boat had vanished, and begging me for the love of God to look for her, and tell him if I could see her; and then, when I had pointed her out, raving again at the men's slowness. Miss Tuke hardly spoke; but her excitement and anxiety were fully as great as mine and Norie's. Her eyes were on fire, and yet she was mortally pale; her bosom panted as though she was fresh from a race, and once she caught Carey's arm and held it, as though she were about to sink down. The sun stood over the point of reef where the yacht had beaten, in the southwest sky, and the heavens being cloudless, the sea within the compass of the reflection of the luminary was like a sheet of flashing gold. It was impossible to look at it; it was nearly as blinding as the sun himself. Fortunately the boat was to the eastward of that splendour, where the water was dark blue, beautifully pure in tint, and that which helped me to keep the boat in sight was the light swell, that would heave it up an instant and expose a portion of the streaming frame, which the sunshine touched and set on fire, so that at such moment the brilliant reflection in the wet planks might have passed for a sun-bright star shining in the soft deep azure of the ocean.

At last the raft was ready. Hunter got into the

box amidships, that was big enough for one only, and Tripshore sat just before it, his legs under him, like a tailor. Both men kept their faces forward. They paddled nimbly, and though the raft was not more shapely than a stage that a carpenter works upon over a ship's side, they managed to impel it at a fair pace. They had to come down the creek, and strike the sea at the opening between the beach and the reef; but the water was very smooth, there was scarcely any tide, and in five minutes they were clear of the reef, and propelling the raft very steadily towards the boat.

I ran down the hill to the beach to watch them from that point, and the others you may be sure followed me. I found that I could see the boat as plainly from the beach as from the hill, and perceived that the men had it in sight too, by the steadiness with which they aimed the raft at it. We all stood in a breathless state, watching the strange figure of that raft, and the sparkle of the paddles as the men flourished them. Our lives might depend upon the amazing discovery of that boat, that veritable God-send, which lay floating there, and the one passionate thought in me now was, will she be in a fit state to carry us?

Nimbly as the men plied their paddles, the raft took a desperate long time in reaching the boat. I

knew that not only by my impatience, but by the passage of the magnificent flood of light upon the sea. Even when the raft seemed quite close to the boat, she was still a good distance off, and I waited and waited to see the flash of the little paddles cease, until I believed the men would go on paddling for ever.

But even so weary a waiting must come to an end at last. The paddles were dropped, and keeping my eye at the glass, I perceived the men lean over and endeavour to right the boat. Three times they tried, each time depressing the keel to the water's edge, but no further; but the fourth time they succeeded; and then, instead of her keel, I saw the gunwales of the boat, like a black line upon the blue.

I now supposed they would make the line fast, and begin to tow her; instead of which they fell to baling her out, one with his boots and the other with his cap. This would be a tedious process; but on reflection I judged they would not be able to tow the boat full of water, for the raft was hard enough to propel alone. I watched the baling with a feeling of passionate expectation. If the boat was injured, the water would flow into her as fast as they threw it out; if uninjured, her gunwales would rise. I explained this to Miss Tuke and Norie, and we

watched the boat as persons standing upon a gallows might watch for the messenger who is coming with a reprieve, but who may come too late.

At last I clearly perceived that the gunwales rose. I could not be deceived. The telescope was a good one: when I had first looked at the boat after they had righted her, her gunwales only made a thin line, and now they were showing to the height of three or four inches. By this I knew that if the boat leaked at all, the leak would be a trifling one, to yield to such baling as that; and in a transport of delight I shouted out that the boat was sound! that our deliverance was at hand! and ran to Sir Mordaunt, pointing to the boat, and calling that our deliverance was at hand! He was too much affected to speak; he got up, and stood looking. I gave him the glass, and asked him to judge for himself how the boat grew up out of the water. He rested the telescope on my shoulder, and I felt the tube trembling in his grasp. He peered, and exclaimed, "There can be no question that she is the *Lady Maud's* boat, Walton. I see the gilt stripe round her."

"She must be the boat that the men launched," I answered, "and that capsized with them. She must therefore have been floating about here ever

since, and it is wonderful that we have not seen her before."

"She was our biggest boat!"

"Certainly she was!" I cried. "She will carry us all! We have but to rig and stock her with provisions and water, and sail away in her."

"Ah!" he said, in a trembling voice, "God has watched over us!"

I felt that as profoundly as he, and could have fallen on my knees. It was as though a miracle had been wrought, to find that boat there close to the island, manifestly uninjured by the heavy seas which the gale had raised, drifting into our sight in time to stop Hunter from risking his life on his miserable raft, and at the very moment when our prospects looked utterly dark and hopeless.

The men gave over baling after they had been at that work about three-quarters of an hour. The line of immersion indicated that there was still water in the boat, but she showed a good side, and was no longer the drowned thing she had been. The sinking of the sun warned them to stop baling: it was approaching the horizon, and there would be no twilight to help us when it was gone. They kept their places in the boat, and took the raft in tow, and by leaning over the side managed to paddle the boat along as fast again as they could have

urged the raft. Indeed, they were not above twenty minutes in performing the journey. We stood on the beach to receive them, and when they were within earshot we all of us cheered and cried to them. They answered our shouts heartily; and so, paddling the boat around the point of reef, they brought her to the entrance of the creek and came ashore, bringing with them the end of the tow-line.

It would have moved you, I am sure, to have seen us shaking hands with the two men. We crowded round them, and only let them go because they said they were wild with thirst. Norie and I then waded into the water, and, laying hold of the boat's gunwale, looked into her. There was not more than a foot of water in her, and this being as bright as glass, I could clearly see that her bottom was perfectly sound. Indeed, I could not perceive that she had sustained any injury, unless I except the loss of her rudder and her amidship thwart, that was started on the port side.

I called to Sir Mordaunt: "She is an old friend, and you were not mistaken. Here is the name *Lady Maud* in black and white"—pointing to the stern.

In truth she might well have been called the yacht's long-boat, for, when on the chocks just abaft the foremast, she had the look of a long-boat, with

her square stern, plump sides, and motherly beam. Her brass rowlocks hung by their laniards; her rudder was, as I have said, gone, but the gudgeons were standing—that is, the eyes on which the rudder had been hung.

To secure her for the night, Norie and I hauled her to the head of the creek, which brought her close to the beach.

"There is nothing the matter with her," said I to Tripshore, as he and Hunter rejoined us.

"Nothing, praise the Lord," he replied.

"She'll want a new rudder," said I, "and we must rig her. But that is easily done. To-morrow morning we'll set to work and give her an outfit."

"Will she carry us all?" asked Miss Tuke.

"Ay, miss, and half as many again," answered Hunter. "That fore-tops'l yard there, Mr. Walton, will be the very thing for a mast. Pity we sent away the top-gallant-yard in the raft this morning, sir."

"Oh, we'll find something to bend a sail to," said I; glad to find that the man's mutinous manner had left him, and that he talked with his old civility.

As we strolled slowly back to the hut the sun sank, and so magnificent was the sight of the huge red and flashing luminary, poised like a vast wheel

of fire upon the polished red water, that we all stopped to look at it, and kept silence as the orb gradually drew down. For a few minutes after it was gone, the sky in the west seemed as though a great city was burning out of sight under it, so terribly splendid was the crimson glare upon the heavens. But this awful and majestic light faded fast, sea and sky took a kind of yellow colour, and then they became grey, and quickly changed into darkness, and night came upon us with a single stride, with a bright moon overhead, and the water in the north full of starlight.

The discovery and possession of our boat had put us all into fine spirits. Instead of entering the hut, we seated ourselves upon the coral sand at the top of the beach, and clear of the grass, that soon began to sparkle in the moonshine with the dew. The air was moist, but it was deliciously cool, and it was pleasanter to sit in the light of the bland and beautiful planet than in the dark hut; and, moreover, there was something finely in harmony with our hopeful and grateful spirits in the peace of the sea, with the darkness and the stars in the north and east, and the flood of moonlight in the south, and in the soft creaming of the little breakers and the distant melodious wash of the swell over the line of reef.

We sat talking of our chances of escape, and in what direction we should steer the boat. I told them a story of three sailors who had sailed a smaller boat than ours over two thousand miles of sea, and related some of the hardships they had endured; how they never despaired, but manfully struggled on and on; until, after many days, and after they had measured the amazing distance of two thousand miles, they were picked up by a brig, and safely landed in England.

Then we talked over the provisioning of the boat. Miss Tuke asked how we should be able to carry water to drink.

"In the beef cask," said I. "We will test it. If it leaks, we must endeavour to make it tight."

"There's the sherry cask," said Tripshore.

"I know," I replied; "but we will carry the sherry with us, if the other cask will hold water."

"How much will it hold?" asked Sir Mordaunt.

"Between twenty and thirty gallons, I should say," I replied.

"And how long will that quantity last?" inquired Norie.

"Why," said I, "don't you see, Norie, that must depend upon how much we use. Twenty-five gallons will be two hundred pints. There are eight of us,

and even a liberal allowance would give us a fortnight's supply."

"We could sail across the Gulf in that time," exclaimed Mrs. Stretton.

"Norie," said Sir Mordaunt, leaning towards the doctor, and speaking softly, though I heard him, "before we quit the island, you will keep your promise?"

"I will set about it in the morning," responded Norie.

I knew this referred to the cross that Sir Mordaunt wished to erect over his wife's grave. Hearing what had been said, I remarked that, as there would be a deal of work to be done in the morning, it would be wise to settle the programme at once.

"You, Norie," said I, "will carry out Sir Mordaunt's wishes. That will be your part, and we shall expect nothing else from you. You and I, Tripshore, will fit and rig the boat. Hunter, you will help Mrs. Stretton and Miss Tuke to empty the beef cask, and then test it, and if it leaks you must turn to and make it tight—if you can; and if you can't, then we must capsize the sherry and use that cask. Mrs. Stretton, you will cook more beef after breakfast, so that we can ship a fair supply; and, indeed, you and Miss Tuke and Carey will see to the pro-

visions, for when Hunter is done with the cask, he'll join us at the boat. Is my programme to your liking?"

They all said yes, it would do very well.

"But what is my work?" said Sir Mordaunt.

"Why," said I, "you can act as overseer, and take care that there is no skulking among us."

My poor friend probably felt that this was about as much as he could do, for though he begged a little to be made practically useful, he gave over his entreaties very soon.

For nearly an hour we remained talking in this manner; but now the dew was falling like rain, and I advised the ladies to withdraw to the hut.

"Let us thank God, before we retire, for the mercy and goodness He has shown us this day," said Sir Mordaunt.

So we all knelt down upon the sand in the moonlight, whilst the baronet prayed aloud; and when our thanksgiving was over we shook hands, and all of our company, except the seamen and I, withdrew to the hut.

"We had better keep watch, as we did last night, my lads," said I.

"Ay, ay," they answered.

We debated, and then settled that Tripshore

should stand the first watch, Hunter the second, and I the last.

"Is it worth while keeping the fire in?" asked Tripshore.

"No," I replied. "I am satisfied that no vessels approach these waters, and a fire is useless. The weather looks settled; we shall have the sun in the morning, and then we can light the fire. Keep your eye on the boat, Tripshore, and watch for any more wreckage that may come ashore."

So saying, I went to the hut, followed by Hunter, and dragging up a bit of the sail, so as to make a pillow, I put down my head, and was soon fast asleep.

CHAPTER IX.

I WAS awakened by Hunter. It was quite dark, for the moon had gone. I rose and went into the open air, and found the sky cloudless as I had left it, and the stars shining brightly. Some of the stars upon the horizon were so large and clear that they looked like the riding-lamps of ships lying close off shore, or lighthouse lamps. There was breeze enough to keep the water shivering, and the temperature was as chilly as an October night in England.

After a while I felt the darkness and the silence

very oppressive. The sea made a peculiar moaning noise at the other side of the island, and the wind murmured with a complaining note among the trees where the hut stood. I felt then, as I had often felt before when on board ship, that at sea loneliness is never a keener sense than on a quiet, fine night. Wrapped in shadow, the deep is a mystery, and the glorious stars, instead of cheering, chill the mind by their measureless distance, and by the soul-subduing wonder of the black and spacious heights they illustrate.

Along the beach where the breakers ran were thin lines of blue fire, and beyond, again, the phosphorus flashed and faded in the invisible swell as it coiled noiselessly along the ebony surface of the water. However, I fixed my thoughts upon the work that the sun would rise upon, and whilst I moved to and fro, plotting and planning and thinking over our wants when in the boat, and on what course I should steer her, the east grew pale, and very quickly the dawn came. In that ashen light the sea and the island and the grey heaven of fainting stars made an indescribably melancholy spectacle. But soon the east became of a delicate rose-colour, that swiftly brightened into a radiant pink; and then, as with a bound, the sun soared out of the sea, the heavens grew blue, the water

sparkled like silver, and another brilliant, beautiful tropical day was born.

My spirits revived with the sun, and after glancing at the boat to see that she was all right, and running my eye over the beach to observe if any more wreckage had washed up, I set to work to collect a quantity of brushwood, and piling a portion of it in the fireplace that had been built, I unscrewed one of the magnifying lenses in the telescope, and very soon had a blaze. Then, to economise time, I went down to the boat, taking with me the shells we had used as drinking vessels and baled her out. When she was dry I thoroughly overhauled her, and found her perfectly sound, with those exceptions I have elsewhere mentioned. I returned to the beach, and having selected a piece of planking fit to serve for a rudder, I fetched the chopper and a knife, and fell blithely to work to fashion a rudder. This, to be sure, was a very trifling job, and I had finished it, and was turning over the spikes in the carpenter's chest, to select a couple of them to bend into pintles, when Tripshore and Hunter came out of the hut, and before they reached me all the others appeared.

Hunter had forgotten what his work was, and when I reminded him, he at once returned to the hut and set to work to empty the beef-cask.

Tripshore and I then started upon rigging the boat. First we carried the topsail-yard down to her, fitted it with stays, and shaped one end of it with the chopper, so as to step it. The yard-arm sheave-hole was the very thing for halliards, and happily plenty of gear had washed ashore with the sails and yards to serve us with material for stays and rigging. When we stepped the yard we found it suited the boat to a hair. We securely set it up, meaning to rig the boat with a single lug, which, having regard to the hoist of her mast, would be sail enough, and returned to the wreckage on the beach, to choose a piece of timber that we could split, and then fish the pieces, to form a gaff or yard.

However, feeling very hungry, we knocked off before tackling this job, and went up to the hut for breakfast. I shook hands with Sir Mordaunt and the ladies, and looking about me, asked where Hunter was.

"Why," said the baronet, "he has rolled the beef-cask to the well, to test it by filling it."

"Couldn't he have done that with salt water?" I asked.

"He asked me to explain," continued the baronet. "He said that after washing the salt out of the cask he would fill it. If it didn't leak, then, by lashing

a couple of planks or spars, one on each side, to it, you and Norie and he and Tripshore could carry the cask full of water across the island, which would save the delay and labour of going to and fro to fill it with the kettle. If, on the other hand, it leaked, then he said he could repair it as well there as here."

"The man's no fool," said I. "That notion of carrying the cask full, direct from the well, shows forethought, for it certainly would take us all day, journeying to and fro, to fill it with the kettle. But how is he going to fill it? He's left the kettle behind." And I pointed to the kettle, that stood near the hut.

"He emptied Carey's work-box, saying that would do to bale out the water from the well."

I burst into a laugh. "After that," said I, "who will doubt that necessity is the mother of invention?"

As I said this I caught sight of Hunter coming around by the bushes. He was purple in the face with heat, and flourished the work-box as he came.

"Well, Hunter," I cried, "how have you got on, my man?"

"The cask's sound," he replied. "It's full o' water, and don't drain a drop."

"Capital!" I exclaimed.

"There'll be nothen to do," said he, "but to lash a piece o' timber on either side, and bring the cask along, full, as it is. And the supporters 'll do to fix it in the boat with; ye'll have to keep it end up, and a few planks and a piece o' sailcloth 'll save it from slopping."

We all heartily praised his foresight. I asked Mrs. Stretton if we could have breakfast.

"Yes," she answered, in her simple way, and her fine, rich voice. "That kettle is full of turtle, Mr. Walton, ready to eat."

But before breaking our fast we knelt down, to offer up thanks to God for His merciful protection. I make no excuse for recording these prayers. They cheered us greatly. They reminded us of the Friend to whom we had been taught all our lives that no appeal is ever made in vain. They made us look up and feel that, desolate, shipwrecked, destitute as we were, yet with God to help us we should be as strong, our prospects as bright and sure, as though we were in a situation to supply all the means necessary to liberate us from this imprisonment. I particularly noticed that none of us were more earnest at these times than Tripshore. He had been an ocean sailor, and in spite of landsmen's theories about Jack, I never knew a real sailor—I mean a genuine seaman, who has knocked about in

big ships and looked danger in the eye, and knows the sea as a child knows its mother's face—who had not a veneration for God in his soul, who had not in his heart all the makings of an honest religious man, no matter how he covered up his instincts and assumed the indifference which he dropped when alone, or when a call was made upon his inner nature.

We made a good breakfast, for the turtle was excellent eating, though for salt we had nothing better than the brine in which the beef was pickled. We wanted water, however, and drew lots who should fill the kettle. It fell to Norie, who trudged off cheerfully, and was back before we had finished our meal.

If I was sure of finding no other audience than sailors, I would go closely into the preparations we made for leaving the island; but landsmen cannot follow sea terms, and there is no other language in which a man can write about the sea than the language sailors themselves use.

As regards the rigging of the boat, we had pretty well all we wanted to our hands. Hunter joined us, having done with his cask, and before the sun had reached the meridian we had fitted the boat with a rudder and tiller, shaped some planks into the likeness of oars, fashioned a yard

and bent a sail to it, and knocked the started thwart into its place.

This brought us to the dinner hour, and when we went to the hut to get something to eat, I found that Mrs. Stretton had cooked several pieces of beef, and that Miss Tuke and Carey had, between them, packed the biscuits in the maid's box, and stored all the best of the flour in the tinned-meat cases, which receptacles were compact, and to our purpose. I forgot Norie's share until we had done dinner, when Sir Mordaunt, taking my arm, led me round to the side of the hill, where I saw a rude cross firmly set up over the grave, and upon the cross-piece, in bold letters, "Agnes Brookes," with the date of her death. I put my hand upon the cross, and found it as firm as a tree.

"Norie has done his work very well," said I.

"He has, and I am deeply obliged to him," replied Sir Mordaunt.

"The task has occupied him the whole morning. It was tedious work. He was forced to use a piece of rock for a hammer, as the chopper was constantly in use among you on the beach. I shall quit this island with a very different heart from what I should have left it had we sailed away and left her lying as she was first buried, without a stone to mark her grave."

He spoke with the tears coursing down his cheeks, and grasping my hand, he thanked me for the sympathy I had shown him, and the readiness with which I had complied with his wishes.

I left him whilst he knelt down to say a short prayer, for the time of our embarkation was close at hand, and I hoped to have put the island out of sight before the sun was gone. I called to Norie and the men, and told them that our next business was to go across the island and fetch the beef-cask. They were ready to accompany me, so arming ourselves with some seizings and a couple of pieces of timber, we marched across the island to the well.

We found the cask standing full of water as Hunter had left it. It was as tight as a shell, and on tasting the water I perceived that Hunter had carefully cleansed the cask of the salt. We lashed the pieces of timber to it, and the four of us stooping at once, we got the bars upon our shoulders and raised the cask, and away we went with it, keeping step, and presently landed the cask on the beach close to the boat.

But after we had put the cask down, and I had looked from it to the boat, I found myself glancing at the sherry-cask under the trees. It was a smaller cask by several gallons, but much stronger, and fitter for the storage of water.

"I doubt," said I to the others, "if there'll be room in the boat for both casks. Yonder cask should hold as much water as we are likely to need."

"I have been thinking of that, too, sir," said Tripshore. "The little 'un 'll be the better cask for us."

Both Hunter and Norie were of the same opinion.

"Then," said I, "I'll tell you what we'll do. This rain-water is not over sweet: we'll leave about a third of the sherry in the cask there, and fill it up with water, and that will make a refreshing drink."

This was thought a good notion; so we went to work and let run about two-thirds of the sherry, filled up the cask with water, and fitting in the head of it, which had been knocked out, got the cask into the boat, and securely lashed it amidships. We then brought down all the provisions we meant to take with us; fixed the little tell-tale compass to the after-thwart, put the telescope into the boat, took in some cloths of canvas to serve as a spare sail, and all being ready, we hauled the boat round to a point where the women could step aboard.

CHAPTER X.

It was about two o'clock in the afternoon, the sun fiercely hot, and a little breeze blowing from the eastwards. After the women were in, we put the dog aboard, and then the rest of us entered. I had been greatly afraid that all this freight would sink the boat very deep; but when we were all in I was rejoiced to perceive that, in consequence of the boat's beam, the point of immersion was not so high by a streak as I had feared.

I took the tiller, and on either side of me sat Miss Tuke and Mrs. Stretton. Sir Mordaunt sat next his niece, and Norie next the widow. Carey occupied a thwart just abaft the mast. The dog was in the bows, and the men forward, working the paddles to bring us clear of the reef.

In this manner we went along until we had got the westernmost point of the reef under our stern. The men then threw in their paddles and hoisted the sail. There was a pleasant little breeze, as I have said, and the moment the boat felt the pressure, she began to run, making a pretty tinkling sound of water along her sides, and leaving two

thin lines of foam and bubbles astern of her, and rolling over the swell very buoyantly.

I had made up my mind at starting to try for the land that was in sight, and accordingly headed the boat for the direction in which it bore, steering by the compass, for the land was invisible from the level of the water. I then asked Norie to lend me his pencil, and being without paper, drew a rude chart upon the after-thwart; that is, I made a mark to signify the island we were leaving, and set down N. E. S. and W. around it, according to the indication of the compass.

Miss Tuke asked me what I was doing.

"We shall require to know the bearings of the island we were wrecked on," I replied; "for unless we get them it will be a thousand to one if ever we shall be able to recover the remains of Lady Brookes."

Sir Mordaunt instantly pricked up his ears.

"How will that help us, Walton?" he asked, eagerly.

"If I mark off our courses," I replied, "then, should we be picked up by a vessel, or make inhabited land, we shall be able to calculate by the latitude and longitude of the vessel, or the land, whereabouts our island is. Of course we cannot hope to be quite accurate, because we shall have to

guess our rate of sailing. But we shall be sufficiently near the mark to render the search for the island easy to any vessel you may send for the coffin."

He was much touched by this proof of my anxiety to help the wish that lay so close to his heart. But Sir Mordaunt Brookes was a man for whom I had a sincere affection, and there was little, indeed, I would not have done to serve him.

After I had made my scrawl on the thwart, we sat all of us for a while in silence, looking at the receding island and the passing water. It was a most perfect tropical day, both sea and sky of a dark, unspeakably pure azure, and wind enough to propel the boat along at about four land-miles an hour. But the sun was terribly fierce, and scarcely endurable. Sir Mordaunt wore Tripshore's hat, and Tripshore had on a woman's straw hat that had come ashore in Carey's box. Norie had twisted a kind of turban cap for himself out of a piece of canvas, and was the best off of us all, as the stuff was white, and kept his head cool. But to sit in that boat without any protection, for the sun was almost directly overhead, was like leaving ourselves to be slowly roasted alive; and unable to stand the heat any longer, I called Hunter and Tripshore aft, to spread the spare sail as an awning, which, after

some trouble, they succeeded in doing, by setting up a couple of paddles as stanchions, and making the clews of the sail fast to them.

This shade afforded us indescribable relief, and helped us to pluck up our spirits, which really swooned in us with the heat.

"Look what a little bit of a rock that island is!" exclaimed Miss Tuke, pointing astern. "What a hard destiny, that with all this wide sea around us, we should have struck upon that tiny spot!"

"Ay," said Sir Mordaunt, "but it would have been a harder destiny had we struck without being able to land upon it."

"Are you pretty comfortable, Mrs. Stretton?" said I, turning to the poor woman by my side, who sat with her hands on her lap, and her fine eyes fixed upon the sea.

"Yes, thank you, Mr. Walton," she answered. "Will you let me ask, if the island you are aiming for is not inhabited, how you will steer?"

"To the southward and eastward," I said; "because we were bound to be well to the north when we struck, and by steering south and east we can hardly fail, even if we miss the populated islands, to drive into the channels where we shall encounter ships."

"Which channel do you suppose will be the nearest?" asked Norie.

"I wish I knew. I have the names of three channels in my head—Crooked Island Passage, Mariguana Passage, and the Caicos Passage—but how they bear, and which one is nearest, I have no more idea than that dog."

"By heading as you propose, Walton," said Sir Mordaunt, "is there not a chance of your missing the land, or drifting out of the track of ships?"

"No," said I, "because by so steering we're bound, if we keep going on long enough, to run down one of the West India Islands."

Foot by foot as we went, the island we were quitting grew smaller and smaller, and its features became indistinguishable in a kind of hazy yellow. The land for which we were trying was visible over our bows, but it was still too far off to make sure of, even with the glass, though my belief was, after a long inspection of it, that it was no more than a cay, similar to the one we had left, but bolder and larger.

Such minute objects as those two specks of land presented heightened rather than impaired our sense of the vast surface of water on which we floated. In such weather as this we were no doubt as safe in that boat as if we had been aboard a

thousand-ton ship; and yet it was impossible to cast our eyes upon the water within a few inches of the gunwale, and then follow the mighty space of gleaming blue to where it met the heavens, without a shudder at the nearness of the great deep. I remember saying to Tripshore, who sat forward, I could not imagine that these wide waters were never traversed by vessels.

"But, sir," said he, "if, as you have all along reckoned, we're in the thick of the Bahama clusters, there's ne'er a vessel as 'ud have any business here."

This was true, and very soon after he had made that answer, the reason why this sea was desolate was vigorously brought home to me by an exclamation from Hunter, who had been hanging his head over the side; for looking to see what had made him call out, I found that the boat was at that moment gliding over a reef that might have been one or ten fathoms below us, for aught I could tell, though it seemed to be within arm's length, so exquisitely transparent was the blue water. The reef was white, and gleamed like silver set in dark blue glass. It was evidently very precipitous, and no more than a narrow shelf, for when we had passed it by a boat's length we could see nothing but the fathomless blue under the side. In the course of

time that submerged reef would raise its head and become an island, with trees and vegetation. It was wonderful to see land, so to speak, in the very making of it.

The sun was fast approaching the sea by the time we had neared the island we were heading for; but long since we had discovered with the help of the glass that it was no more than a cay, uninhabited, with a high rise of land, hard upon forty feet tall, at the northernmost point of it. We could see the sandy beach and the flat land stretching from the foot of the rise, covered with brushwood and trees; and what was more, we could perceive the water all round it studded with reefs, upon which the swell broke in flashing floods of foam, that were blood-red in the rich evening sunshine.

"There's no use going any nearer," said I.

"No, sir, we're near enough," cried Tripshore. "Any one of them reefs would rip the bottom of this boat out of her."

Without another word I eased off the sheet and put the helm up, and presently we had the island on our quarter, and the sun beyond, a great red shield going down without a cloud, and the water beneath it a sheet of molten gold, the extremity of which seemed to touch our boat's side.

Whilst daylight remained we served out supper.

We also took down the sail we had used as an awning, and spread it at the bottom of the boat, for the women to lie on when they felt disposed to sleep. Before I ate my allowance of food I gave the tiller to Norie, and stood up against the mast with the glass, with which, taking advantage of the singular brightness and clearness of the atmosphere at this hour of sundown, I carefully swept the water line, but failed to detect any other object than the island astern and a fragment of the island we had quitted, quivering on the horizon in the north-east. The others watched me eagerly as I ran the glass round the sea, but nothing was said when I exclaimed that there was no vessel to be seen. Indeed, if I could judge their feelings by mine, they were too deeply glad to be in this boat, and sailing away from the island, to find a cause in the vacant sea-line for worrying their hearts. Only a few hours ago our prospects were horribly dark. We were, so to say, locked up on a desolate rock. In their misery and abandonment my companions had sanctioned Hunter's mad scheme; and now here we were in a brave stout boat, a beautiful heaven above us; we were well stocked with provisions, and in respect of accommodation, not much more inconvenienced than in the hut.

We watched in silence the going down of the

sun. It was a noble sight, and full of unspeakable pathos to people in our situation, and to the half-despondent, half-hopeful temper we were then in. The breeze followed us, and the sun was on our right. I wondered when that sun set again where we should be. It had shone that day over our beloved country, it had looked upon dear friends and dear scenes, and now it was going down upon our little boat, a speck, unseen by any eye but God's upon the golden surface of this glorified western ocean. I believe all our thoughts ran somewhat in this way, for, as I have said, none of us spoke whilst the orb was sinking. Even the two seamen looked towards it in rapt postures, and when the last flashing fragment of it vanished, we all drew a deep breath and turned to gaze at one another, and I observed that Mrs. Stretton was crying, but very silently, and in a way that made us see that any notice taken of her would pain her.

"We shall have the moon with us for the greater part of the night," said I; "and that beautiful sky cannot deceive us. It is full of good promise."

"How fast are we sailing, Mr. Walton?" asked Miss Tuke.

I answered about three and a half miles an hour.

"How short the twilight is!" cried Norie. "Look

behind you, Walton. The sky is full of stars. The darkness in the east and that brightness in the west give you night and day side by side."

"Couldn't you spin a yarn, Mr. Walton?" said Tripshore. "There's nothen like stories and songs to keep the heart up."

"But our hearts are not down, Tripshore," I replied. "Our chances are too good for that. Can you sing?"

"A trifle," he said. "But if it's to be singing, I'd rather not be first."

"Well, I'll break ground by telling an adventure," said I; "and when I'm done you'll give us a song."

"Right, sir."

I reflected a bit, and then spun them a yarn about an adventure I met with at a little Chinese village up the Yellow River. Three or four of us, being ashore, had missed our way, and coming to this village, endeavoured to obtain beds for the night, but were everwhere repulsed. Being determined not to lie in the fields, we forcibly took possession of a little house, and went to bed in it. In the middle of the night I and one of my companions, who lay with me on the top of a mattrass, felt it moving, and getting up and tumbling it over,

we found the owner of the house and his wife under it, half dead with fear and suffocation.

When we dragged them out, they made such a noise that a crowd of the villagers came to the house. We feared for our lives, but there was no light, and we had to grope our way. I missed the way and coming to a door, opened it, and put out my hand to feel, and stroked my fingers down a Chinaman's face, the door I had opened being a cupboard, and the man in it hiding there in terror of us. I made them laugh with my description of the horror I felt when I stroked down this naked face. I took it to be a dead man, but not being sure, half closed the door to prevent him coming out, and felt for him again, till I came to his bit of a nose, which I pulled until he screeched out, on which I scrambled across the room, and coming to a door, made out of the house by a back way, and ran for my life.

This story put Norie in mind of a hospital adventure, and when he was done Tripshore sang. He had a strong voice and a correct ear, and his song was a sailor's song, the melody of which was the windlass chorus, "Across the Western Ocean." Hunter and I knew the air, and guessing at the words, we helped Tripshore by joining in at the end of every verse.

By this time the night was all about us, the moon brightly shining, and the great stars flaking the sea with their trickling silver. These crystalline reflections were made exceedingly beautiful by the play of the phosphorus in the sea. The mysterious fires rolled with the swell, and resembled puffs of green steam. The water broken by the boat's stem tinkled through our voices like the bubbling of a fountain, but so strongly phosphorescent was the sea, that our wake was a line of fire; and when Miss Tuke leaned over to look at it, I saw it shining in her eyes and shimmering upon her face, as though phosphorus had been rubbed over her skin.

Our story-telling and singing not only killed the time, but did us good by distracting our thoughts from our position. I kept the ball spinning as long as I could, and then we fell into a general conversation, in the midst of which, and whilst the seamen in the forward part of the boat were arguing upon the bearings of the island we had left, and whilst Norie, who had taken a seat next to Miss Tuke, was talking with her in low tones, I found myself asking Mrs. Stretton what would be her plans when she arrived at Kingston.

"I hardly know, Mr. Walton. I feel like an ocean stray. Besides, I may not be able to get to Kingston, for, should we be picked up by a vessel,

we can scarcely suppose that she will be bound to that place."

"Have you no friends in Ireland?" I asked.

"Yes, but they are poor. They will be able to do nothing for me."

"You have other friends who are not poor," said Sir Mordaunt, gently. "Your future need give you no anxiety."

She held her peace, perhaps scarcely understanding him. But I did. Indeed, I had all along suspected that if our lives were preserved my great-hearted friend would stand by this poor woman whom he had been instrumental in rescuing from a horrible death.

I thought the hour would now be about nine, or even later, and counselled the women to lie down and take rest whilst the boat ran quietly. There was room for all three of them to lie upon the sail in the bottom of the boat, and as Miss Tuke hung back, I got Carey to set the example. She crouched down and got under the thwarts, and when she had stretched herself along the sail she said she was very comfortable. Then Mrs. Stretton lay down, and after a little persuasion from her uncle, Miss Tuke crept under the thwarts. So there were the three of them, snug enough. The end of the sail rolled up furnished them with a

pillow, and the other end was turned over them. The thwarts, overshadowing their faces, protected them from the moonlight and the dew.

As for us men, there was nothing for it but to sleep as we could. The seamen and I divided ourselves into watches, as we had done on the island, it being arranged that I should steer and keep a look-out for the first two hours. These fellows made no trouble about sleeping. Tripshore put his back against the mast, folded his arms, dropped his head, and was asleep in a few moments. Hunter was bothered at first to pose himself comfortably. He tried first one place, then another, until at last he hit upon a posture that pleased him—in the eyes, with his face looking aft, and the dog bolstering him on the right side, and in a short time he was as motionless as the other.

But neither Sir Mordaunt nor Norie could go to sleep for some time, though the doctor closed his eyes and kept his head hung. Sir Mordaunt, indeed, did not try to sleep for a while, but sat close against me, speaking in whispers. We had much to talk about—our cruise, our shipwreck, Lady Brookes' death, our present position, and our chances of preservation. At last weariness mastered him, his voice failed him, and he began to nod, and soon, by his regular breathing, I knew he was asleep.

The breeze held steady; a little more weight had come into it before Sir Mordaunt fell asleep, and the sail pulled well. The narrow furrows of the sea ran in short flashes of foam and broke up the starlight in the water, but gave instead a brilliant surface of phosphoric radiance. On our starboard beam the ocean was a tremulous field of moonlight, but the horizon in the north was very dark, though the lustre of the moon made the sky pale to a long distance beyond the zenith. The water seethed at the boat's stem, and the sobbing sounds caused by the eddies in the wake were very mournful for me, a solitary listener, to hearken to. Indeed, it was a solemn time. It was not only the thoughts of the narrow planks which lay between us and eternity, nor the speculation as to the future, that was for ever active in me. It was the being surrounded by sleepers; it was looking into the bottom of the boat and seeing the glimmering faces of the women in the darkness there; on one side of me the baronet, with the moonlight shining on his hollow countenance, in which all the anguish of the past few days had left an imprint cruelly visible, even in that colourless light; on the other side Norie, who had met misfortune as a gallant man should, helping us all as heartily as was in his power, peacefully resting, with his chin upon his

breast and his arm hanging idly down; and forward the figures of the two men and the dog, dark as bronze statues, and as motionless. I say, it was the looking first at those silent and unconscious beings, and then away at the leagues of sea, and the serene stars, and the silver moon, poised in the silvery blue ether, that made this watch of mine as solemn to me as a long prayer. The sense of loneliness no pen could express. The slumber of the people about me heightened it. Now and again one would mutter softly; once there came a laugh from the bottom of the boat; frequently I would hear a deep sigh, that sounded above the mild complaining of the wind in the sail and the delicate hissing of the passing water.

Again and again I stood up to search the water, and shortly before I called Tripshore I thought I saw a darkness on the sky over the starboard bow; but when I pointed the telescope at it I could see the stars there shining down to the very level of the deep.

But the bright moon was very comforting. It enabled me to see all my companions, and to command a wide expanse of water, which was like giving the soul breathing room, for nothing is more terrible than darkness to persons placed as we were. It seems to cloak and muffle up the instincts, and fold

up the spirit as though it were death's mantle. Besides, I could watch the compass, and know how we were heading.

I held my place longer than two hours, as I believe, wishing Tripshore to get all the refreshment he could out of his spell of sleep; but I grew so drowsy at last that, lest I should unconsciously fall asleep myself, I was forced to arouse him. I had to awake Norie, to hold the tiller, whilst I went forward to call Tripshore, not choosing to sing out to him and disturb the others. But before doing this I made a calculation of the distance run since we had left the island, and scribbled the figures down on the thwart.

At the first touch the seaman started up. I whispered to him that his watch had come round; and then telling him to keep the boat dead as she was going, to look smartly about for ships, and to call me if the wind drew ahead or the weather changed, I took his place, and speedily fell asleep.

CHAPTER XI.

When I opened my eyes again, the dawn was just breaking, and I discovered, to my wonder, that I had slept right through the night. No one had aroused me. My limbs were as stiff as broomsticks, from having been kept in one posture for so many hours, and my clothes were saturated with dew. I gaped with something of astonishment at the scene of sky and ocean, for it was not easy to immediately realize our position. And then again the sight my eyes encountered was very striking for a man whose senses were struggling out of the cocoon of sleep to behold; for the dawn in the east lay in the sky like a sheet of delicately green glass, faintly illuminated at the water line, and melting into blackness as it approached the zenith. But the rest of the heavens were wrapped in night, and the sea was of a pitchy black, even under the dawn, which made the horizon stand out against it with fearful distinctness.

But, even as my eye rested on that strange, cold, pallid green light, it changed its colour into primrose, the sky brightened into sapphire and gold, and the sun showed his flaming head.

Hunter was at the helm, and Tripshore asleep in the bows of the boat, but the sun woke him up; and as I sat rubbing my legs, to get the blood to circulate, and looking around me, Sir Mordaunt called good-morning to me, and then Norie; and glancing at the bottom of the boat, I perceived that everybody was awake.

I scrambled off my perch and helped the women on to their feet, and was glad to learn that they had all managed to get some sleep. Then, taking the glass, I planted my back against the mast and searched the sea, that was now brightly illuminated by the soaring sun, but to no purpose: there was nothing to be seen.

The breeze that was propelling us when I fell asleep still blew, the water was smooth, and the morning had broken with a cloudless sky. Both Hunter and Tripshore told me there had been no change of wind or weather in their watches, and when therefore I made a calculation to jot down upon the thwart, I reckoned that we could not have run less than forty miles from the time of our leaving the island.

"It is impossible," I exclaimed, "that we can go on sailing very much longer without sighting land. That we have not made land sooner, I can only account for by supposing that the island on which

we were wrecked must be lying further to the eastwards than we have imagined."

"In that case, ought we not to steer more to the westward, Walton?" asked Sir Mordaunt.

"I hardly think so," I replied. "Our object is to meet with ships, and not to box ourselves up among a mass of reefs and cays and uninhabited islands."

"Is the compass right, sir, d'ye think?" inquired Hunter.

"Yes," I said, "judging from the bearings of the stars, and the rise and set of the sun."

"Oh, Mr. Walton," cried Miss Tuke, "I hope we shall not have to pass another night in this boat!"

"Courage, Ada, courage!" exclaimed the baronet. "See what a beautiful day has come. Let us think of ourselves as a pleasure party blown out to sea further than we intended to go. There is no danger; a little patience, my love, and all will be well;" and he looked at her, lightly shaking his head, and smiling mournfully.

I glanced at her, to see how she bore all this hard usage of the sea. Her roughened hair, her pale face full of deep anxiety and grief, her apparel creased and defaced by the wet and the wear and tear of shipwreck, did not in my sight, at all events, in the least degree impair her beauty. Indeed, I

could not help thinking that all this disorder of attire, and the wild sparkle in her pretty eyes, and the restlessness of her movements and glances, gave her charms a character that accentuated them with a fresh and fascinating picturesqueness. Norie appeared to share in this opinion, for he would frequently look at her with fervent admiration.

Mrs. Stretton, on the other hand, was much more passive. She gazed dreamily at us with her fine dark eyes as we conversed, yet was always quick to give a smile to any of us who met her glance. She had a rougher appearance than Miss Tuke, owing to her black hair, which, as I have elsewhere said, was remarkably abundant, and hard to stow away without combs and hairpins and such things. She, too, was very pale, but her lips were red and healthy, and her eyes clear and shining.

Of the women, indeed, Carey endured these trials the worst. She had been a plump, piquante little woman aboard the *Lady Maud;* but now her cheeks were fallen in, her eyes sunk and the hollows dark, her lips pale and dry and tremulous, and the expression of her face was haggard, like that of a sick person. I should have supposed that a woman in her station of life would have borne hardship very much more stubbornly than Miss Tuke. But the truth is, and most men's experience confirms it,

the more thoroughbred a woman is, the more effectually can she cope with and support trouble. I would rather any day be in peril with a lady, with no experience whatever of hardships, than with a woman of mean extraction, who has had to rough it, who has had to work, and who therefore you might imagine would be a great help in time of danger, or when hearty activity or the negative virtue of fortitude was wanted.*

Carey's box, that had already done service as a baler, was now used as a washbasin. I filled it with salt water, and the women refreshed themselves by bathing their hands and faces. We men cooled ourselves by splashing up the water over the side. This done, I served out some salt beef and biscuit.

I had taken Hunter's place, and was steering the boat, eating with one hand and balancing the tiller with the other. The seamen were forward, Hunter feeding the dog. I was pointing to the figures I had scribbled upon the thwart, and Sir Mordaunt was calculating with me the distance we had traversed, when I was startled by a vehement cry from Tripshore, and, raising my eyes, I saw him standing with his arm around the mast, and pointing to the sea over our bows.

* Lady Brookes' behaviour may be quoted against me, but it will be remembered that she was an invalid.

"Sail ho!" he yelled.

At this magic sound the whole of us sprang to our feet as one person. The sun being well on the left of us, the horizon ahead was beautifully clear and the sea a soft violet, and upon it, quite visible to the naked eye, was a speck of white.

I snatched up the glass, and pointed it.

"Yes," I cried, "it is a sail!"

Miss Tuke clapped her hands, and gave a loud hysterical laugh.

"Which way is she standing, sir?" shouted Tripshore.

"I can't tell you yet," I replied. "She will be a square-rigged vessel, I believe, for what is showing of her canvas is square."

"Let me look at her," exclaimed Sir Mordaunt, in a voice quivering with excitement.

I gave him the glass. He crossed over to the mast, to rest the telescope against it, and took a long, long look, but could make no more of the object than I.

"But it *is* a sail, uncle?" cried Miss Tuke.

"Certainly it is," he replied; "but it is impossible to tell which way she is going."

The glass was passed from hand to hand.

"Let us finish our breakfast," said I, sitting down again. "Though that vessel should pass without

noticing us, it is enough that we have seen her to prove that we are in navigable waters at last. There will be other vessels about, though we should miss yonder one: be sure of that."

They all seated themselves except Tripshore, who had the glass, and kept it fixed on that small white spot; but though Sir Mordaunt and Miss Tuke pretended to eat, I saw that the sight of that sail had taken away their appetite. They could not remove their eyes from the horizon where that gleaming speck was.

I dare say my own emotions were not less strong than theirs, but I perceived the need of assuming an unconcerned demeanour, so that, if the vessel passed away from us, I should be able with a good face to say that her appearance signified no more than another spell of patience for us, and that other sails would be showing before sundown. Nevertheless, I was looking, too, all the time at that distant sail and every moment growing more and more puzzled by its steadiness and appearance.

"If yonder is a ship," I exclaimed at last, "she is bound to be coming or going our way. We are heading a steady course, and should have noticed by this time if she is crossing our hawse. But she's mighty slow if she's coming our way, and if

she is steering as we are, what manner of vessel must she be to let a boat like this overhaul her?"

"What do you make of her, Tripshore?" called out Sir Mordaunt.

"Why, sir," he answered, "it looks to me as though that bit of white is the main-royal or top-gallant-s'l of a ship heading south."

"But do we rise it?" I asked.

"No, sir. All that it does is to grow bigger, without rising," he answered.

I told him to pass me the glass, and I took another steady look. The object was unquestionably a ship's sail, apparently, as Tripshore had said, the main-royal of a ship; it was square, and white as silver; it was certainly bigger too than it was when I had first looked at it, which struck me as most extraordinary, for the enlargement of the sail proved that we were approaching it, and I could not conceive how it was that other portions of the vessel did not show themselves.

"No use speculating," said I; "we must wait and see."

There was a light swell rolling up from the westward, that made the water look like a waving sheet of dark blue shot-silk; the sea was crisped with little foamy ripples, which ran along with us; but the sun had gathered its fires fast, and was

pouring them fiercely down upon our unsheltered bodies; whilst the atmosphere seemed almost breezeless, in consequence of our being dead before the wind. At intervals a number of flying fish would spark out of the melting glass-like blue of the water, and scatter in prismatic flashes. A frigate-bird came up out of the north, and hovered at a height of about thirty feet over the boat, balancing itself on its exquisitely graceful wings for a minute or so, and then fled and vanished like a beam of light. But we took no notice of these things, nor of the stinging heat of the sun, our thoughts being chained to that sail ahead, that was slowly enlarging its form, but never rising, so as to exhibit other sails beneath it.

"That's no ship, sir," said Hunter, breaking a long silence.

"It looks like a small lugger-rigged boat," exclaimed Sir Mordaunt.

"It certainly is not a ship," said I.

We waited and watched. The sail was a most clear object now, and with the naked eye we could see that it was well on this side the horizon—indeed, the blue waterline rose beyond it.

On a sudden Tripshore let drop the glass to his side, and, looking around, motioned to me with his

head. I quitted the helm, and clambered over to where he stood.

"Look!" said he, in a low voice, with a note of horror in it. "You may see what it is now."

His manner startled me. I took the glass hurriedly, and levelled it.

"My God!" I cried, "what a meeting!"

It was the raft we had sent adrift on the preceding day! The sail was full, the strange machine was swarming along steadily, at the masthead was the piece of inscribed plank, forming a cross upon the water, and with his back to the mast sat the dead messenger.

My blood ran cold. It was a dreadful object to encounter upon that lonely sea. And now that it was come, the disappointment stung me like the very fang of death. I looked round upon my companions, with a hopeless face.

"What is it?" cried Miss Tuke, instantly remarking my looks.

"The raft we sent afloat yesterday," I answered.

She hid her face in her hands. Sir Mordaunt sat looking at the thing, with stony eyes, but neither he nor Mrs. Stretton nor Carey made any observation. The raft was right ahead, and in a short time we should be up with it. To us, who knew what its freight was, it was bad enough to have

even the sail of it in sight; but to come within eyeshot of the corpse, that would by this time be a most loathsome object, was a thing that would have been unendurable to our shaken and agitated and weary hearts. Interpreting my companions' thoughts by my own, I returned to the helm, and headed the boat into the west. This brought the wind abeam; the little craft felt the increased pressure and buzzed along sharply, riding over the swell, that was now dead ahead, like a cork.

I whispered to the baronet that the corpse would have been too shocking an object for the women to see.

"Yes," he answered, under his breath; "and for us too. I could not have borne it. But I hope, now that the raft can no longer serve our purpose, it may speedily go to pieces. The inscription will set people hunting for us."

"If we are rescued, the news will soon get about," I answered.

We drew rapidly away from the forlorn and dismal fabric, yet it excited a fascination that constrained me to keep on stealing glances at it. The condition of mind to which our shipwreck had reduced me was well qualified to furnish a wild and ghastly significance to that dead seaman sailing along out there. I could not dispossess my

imagination of the idea that he was following me with his eyes, and I figured a kind of blind upbraiding in them for leaving him in that mocking, unconsecrated plight. I had the face before me as I had seen it when we sent the raft adrift. It was a dreadful memory to come into my mind at such a time, and a foolish disposition to shed tears assured me of what I had not before suspected, that our hardships and anxieties had lamentably reduced my strength, and that, if we continued in this state much longer, those weakly women there would be able to boast of much more physical stamina than I.

I believe this very thought was in my head when I was aroused from the miserable reverie into which I had sunk by Hunter shouting, "Sail ho!" at the very top of his voice. I started up savagely, maddened for the moment by the fear of another disappointment. The man was pointing into the northwest, and Mrs. Stretton and Miss Tuke, clinging to each other, looked wildly in that direction, whilst Sir Mordaunt and Norie stood peering, with their hands shading their eyes.

"Do you see her, sir?" shouted Hunter. "It's no raft this time! See how she rises!"

I looked, and saw a sail—this time no raft indeed, as Hunter had said, but a vessel swiftly rear-

ing her white canvas above the blue, inch by inch, foot by foot, so that, watching her with the glass, I saw her fore course come up until the arching foot of it was exposed, and then the glimmering top of the black hull quivered in the refractive light upon the water-line.

She was heading dead for us. Until we were sure of this, no one spoke; but when I cried out the news, Tripshore and Hunter and Norie uttered a loud hurrah! Miss Tuke clasped her hands above her head, and gave a long, mad laugh; Mrs. Stretton sobbed as if her heart would break; Carey fell a-dancing in the bottom of the boat; and Sir Mordaunt threw his arms round my neck, and, with his head lying on my shoulder, breathed like a dying man.

I broke away from my poor friend, and bawled to Hunter to lower the sail and stop the boat's way; and, whipping a handkerchief out of Norie's pocket, I fastened it to one of the paddles, and bade Tripshore stand up in the bows of the boat and wave the signal.

The vessel came down upon us fast. What her rig was, I could not yet see. She had main skysail set, and a coil of foam sparkled at her glossy sides, and ran up the sea behind her in a flashing white

line. We had cheered, and given way to the passion of excitement and rapture that the sight of her had kindled in us; but we grew silent very soon, and watched her coming, breathlessly. I knew her people could not fail to see us. But would they heave-to? Would they attempt our rescue? We had to find that out, and the waiting was such mental agony as there are no words to convey any idea of.

One of the most moving memories which my heart carries of our shipwreck, is the faces of my companions turned towards the approaching vessel. Expectation had so wrought upon their lineaments, as to harden them into the severity and immobility of marble: they looked to have been petrified at the very moment when their staring eyes, their parted lips, the forward posture of their heads, showed that the hope and the fear in them were at their greatest height.

Suddenly Tripshore turned his gaping face aft, and cried, in a hoarse voice of triumph, "She'll heave-to, sir!" And, as he said this, the vessel, with her mainsail hanging in the leech-lines and her sky-sail halliards let go, slightly shifted her helm, and went past us at a distance of about five times her own length, drawing out as she passed into a small handsome barque of about three hundred and fifty

tons, with a clipper bow and elliptical stern, a low freeboard, and a white netting round her short raised after-deck. From this point, that was apparently the roof of a deck-cabin, several men were watching us, and forward a small crowd of heads overhung the bulwarks. As soon as she was to leeward of us, she put her helm down, swung her foreyards, and lay hove-to.

"Out with your paddles, men!" I shouted; and, in a fury of impatience, Tripshore and Hunter threw over the rude oars, and the boat went slowly towards the barque. As we approached, we were hailed by one of the men on the poop.

"Boat ahoy! What boat is that?"

I was overjoyed to be addressed in English, for I had feared from the appearance of the vessel that she was a foreigner. I put my hand to the side of my mouth, and shouted back—

"We are the survivors of the passengers and crew of the schooner yacht *Lady Maud*, that was lost four days since on a cay about sixty miles distant from here. We have been adrift since yesterday. Will you take us on board?"

He waved his hand, and answered, "Yes, yes; come alongside. But is that another boat out there?" pointing in the direction where we had last seen the raft.

"No," I cried. "I will explain what that is when we get aboard."

A rope was flung to us, the gangway unshipped, and some steps thrown over. All hands had assembled to see us arrive. The first to be handed up was Miss Tuke; she was followed by Mrs. Stretton and Carey; then went Sir Mordaunt and Norie, the rest of us following with the dog. On gaining the deck a giddiness seized me, and I had to keep fast hold of the arm of the man who had helped me up the steps, to save myself from falling. It was, in truth, the effect of a wild hurry of conflicting emotions; but a short stern struggle subdued the sensation, and glancing around at the men, who were staring at the women and ourselves with open mouths, I asked for the captain.

"I'm the master, sir," said a quiet-looking, sunburnt man, who stood close to the gangway.

I grasped his hand and shook it, and then, without further preface, told him our story, briefly indeed, though I gave him all the facts.

"Well, sir," said he, when I had done, glancing at Sir Mordaunt very respectfully, "you've had a hard time of it, and I'm glad to have come across you. This barque is the *Princess Louise*, from New Providence to Porto Rico. I hope Porto Rico isn't out of your way?"

"No," I answered. "We should be able to get to Europe from Porto Rico without trouble."

"Certainly," said he. "But we sighted a small boat out yonder. Does she belong to your people?"

I told him that she was a raft we had sent adrift from the island, with a board at the mast-head, inscribed with the circumstances of our ship-wreck; but I said nothing about the dead man on it. I then begged him to tell us what reckoning his vessel was now in, explaining that Sir Mordaunt Brookes was anxious to have the bearings of the rock on which we had been wrecked, that he might recover the remains of his wife, for interment in England.

"Can you give me your course, and distance run?" said he.

I answered that it was jotted down on the after-thwart in the boat. He at once went over the side into the boat, entered the figures in a pocket-book, and returned.

"We'll get the bearings of your island fast enough presently," said he. "That's a good boat of yours —too good to send adrift. Here, Mr. Swift," he sung out to a man I afterwards learnt was his chief mate, "get that boat cleared out, will you, and slung aboard. You can stow her on the booms. And swing the fore-yards as soon as that job's done.

Bo'sun, take charge of these two men"—indicating Tripshore and Hunter—"and see that they get something to eat at once. Will you follow me, ladies and gentlemen?"

He led the way into the cabin, or deck-house. We hobbled after him, for, owing to our confinement in the boat and the want of space to stretch our limbs, we had some ado to work our legs properly. The cabin was a very plain interior, with a table amidships, flanked by hair sofas, and a row of five small berths on the port side. We sat down, not because we were weary, but because we found exercise an awkward and inconvenient effort. The captain, whose name was Broach, went to the cabin door and bawled to the steward, who was among the men on deck, to put some beef and biscuit and claret upon the table. He then entered his berth, and returned with a large chart of the Bahamas and West India Islands, which I saw Sir Mordaunt devouring with his eyes, proving where his heart was.

"Yesterday," said Captain Broach, "we were in such and such a position, and our position now would be here," said he, putting his finger on the chart. "You say you have been running fifty miles to the south'ard and east'ard." He measured the distance, and exclaimed, "Here you are; here are two cays. It is one of these, gentlemen."

"It will be the one to the norrard," said I.

"Then," said he, writing down the position of the island on a piece of paper, and handing it to the baronet, "this will be the latitude and longitude of it, sir."

I reflected, and then addressing Sir Mordaunt, "Those bearings," said I, "prove that Purchase was heavily out in his latitude *as well* as his longitude."

He motioned, with an imploring gesture. "For God's sake, don't recall the man!" said he. "I desire," he continued, turning to the skipper, "that you will look upon us as passengers, for whose accommodation and entertainment you will charge as you think proper; though," he said, extending his hand for the other to shake, and speaking with great emotion, "no recompense we can make you will express our gratitude for the prompt and generous help you have given us."

"Say nothing about it, sir," answered the skipper, in a blunt, sailorly way. "It seems hard that shipwreck should befall gentlemen like you, to whom the sea is no business; and I am very sorry indeed for the ladies"—giving them a low bow. "Now, steward, bear a hand with the grub, man! Shove it on the table, *can't* ye?"

We had not long before eaten our breakfast in the boat, and even had we not already broken our

fast, I question whether the emotions which kept our hearts hammering in our breasts would have left us any appetite for the victuals on the table. But Captain Broach begged us so heartily to eat, that we made a show of munching, just to please him. He said he had but the cabins we saw. One of them was his, and the next one the mate's, and the third abutting on that the second mate's and carpenter's. "But," said he, "if you don't mind a squeeze, I think we can manage. The ladies will have that cabin"—pointing. "There are two bunks in it, and we can lay a mattrass on the deck." And then he arranged for me to share the mate's cabin, Norie the second mate's, and Sir Mordaunt would have a cabin to himself.

This was a very good arrangement, and so the matter was settled.

We then inquired how long it would take to reach Porto Rico?

"I give the *Louise* four days," he answered, "reckoning fine weather and breezes after this pattern. When I tell you that we left New Providence the day before yesterday at six o'clock in the evening, you'll believe the barque has got heels."

He sat talking with us, asking questions, and, with every answer we made him, growing more and more respectful. He told Sir Mordaunt that he

would find no difficulty in chartering a small vessel to fetch Lady Brookes' body; indeed, he said, it would give him pleasure to see to that himself, for he knew a man at San Juan who owned a trading sloop, a fast vessel, that would not keep Sir Mordaunt waiting. He also told us that steamers from Liverpool, Southampton, Spain, and the United States touched at Porto Rico—how often he could not say, but often enough to serve our end.

"And now," said he, "there's Mr. Swift and myself—I'll say nothing about the second mate—plain sailors, with kits not good enough for a man to go to Court in; but such as our togs are, gentlemen, you're heartily welcome to the loan of them till you can get better. I'm only sorry," addressing Miss Tuke, "that we can't accommodate you, ladies, in that way. But we're all men aboard the *Louise*, and so you'll please take that as our excuse."

He called the steward, to see to our cabins and supply our wants, and, bestowing a regular all-round bow upon us, he went on deck, where we could hear the men singing out as they braced round the yards and got way upon the barque.

My story is as good as ended. You have had our shipwreck, and now our rescue. But there still

remains a short length of line to coil down, and I may as well leave the yarn clean and shipshape.

Imagine that two days have passed. In that time we have slept well, eaten well, pulled ourselves together. We have all of us knelt down in the cabin, and offered up hearty and earnest thanks to Almighty God for His merciful preservation of us; and now we are looking about us with tranquil hearts, which have already grown used to this new condition of life, waiting with patience for the hour when the cheery cry of "Land ho!" shall bring us within reach of the scores of things our destitute condition demands; now and again talking of the dead; of the yacht, that the sea had scattered as the wind scatters chaff; and of our sufferings and anxieties and painful struggles on the little island. The weather remained beautiful—a constant wind blowing, though shifting occasionally to the northward and then hauling back again to the eastward, the sea calm and frosty with the breaking heads of the tiny surges, and a heaven of stainless, glorious, tropical blue.

It was the night of the second day, dating from our rescue. I had been conversing with Mrs. Stretton and Mr. Swift, the chief mate of the *Princess Louise*, who, it turned out, had known Captain Stretton, and the vessel he commanded. In another

part of the deck were Norie and Miss Tuke and her uncle. The moon was standing over the sea, shedding little or no radiance upon the sky, but whitening the water under it with lines of light which looked like silver serpents, as the swaying of the swell and the fluttering of the ripples kept them moving.

I left Mrs. Stretton and the mate, and walked to the end of the short poop. The wheel was just under me, and the figure of the fellow who grasped it was so motionless, that he and the wheel and the yellow binnacle-card were more like a painting than real things. I stood drawing at a cigar, enjoying the tobacco with unspeakable relish after my long enforced abstinence, and contemplating the beautiful dreamlike picture of the barque lifting her heights of glimmering canvas into the dark air, blotting out a whole heaven of stars with her dim and ghostly cloths, amid the hollows of which, and among the delicate gear and rigging, the soft tropical breeze was whispering in notes that sounded like faint and distant voices singing. The eastern sky was glorious with stars, of such magnitude and beauty as you never behold in our northern climes, with a fine sharp whiteness, though here and there the smaller stars shone in delicate blues and in rose-colour, like the reflection of a bright flame in

highly-polished metal. It was a night for solitude. The seething of the thin line of foam at the vessel's sides, the occasional clank of the wheel-chains, the mysterious song of the wind up in the darkness among the pallid sails there, the leagues of black water, the star-laden sky, and the moon clothing with the beauty of her soft, white, misty light a large circumference of the dark heavens, combined to produce a deep sense of peace in the heart, not without melancholy, but infinitely soothing, and to make one almost dread the intrusion of common-place sounds.

My thoughts were full of the past, and let me say of the future likewise. A low, soft, girlish laugh from the group at the other end of the deck had set my fancy rambling, and in the short time I was permitted to stand there musing, the thoughts which swept through my mind—a commingling of ship-wreck and ocean perils, and of fancies very much nearer heaven than any the deep could yield me—made a wild and singular panorama of visions.

But my reverie was interrupted by Sir Mordaunt coming up to me. He stood at a little distance, peering, as if he was not sure, and then said, "Is that you, Walton?"

"Yes," I answered.

"What a perfect night, is it not?" he exclaimed.

"It makes our shipwreck seem no more than a dream. We might still be on board the poor *Lady Maud*, and all the anguish we have suffered and escaped, a nightmare."

"We are lucky," said I, "to have fallen into such kind hands. But I am rather puzzled to know what I shall do when we reach Porto Rico. Is there a consul there?"

"Oh," said he, "I have arranged with Captain Broach to obtain the funds we shall require. Don't let that trouble you."

"And Mrs. Stretton? Shall you send her to Kingston?"

"I will wait till I am ashore, to talk to her. I have a scheme—but I am not yet resolved. She shall find me her friend. She is strangely mixed up in the cruellest experience that ever befell me, and the sufferings she has passed through give her the strongest claims upon my sympathy. By the way," he continued, "I have a piece of news for you. It scarcely took me by surprise. Norie has proposed to Ada, and she has accepted him."

"Indeed!"

"I say I am not surprised, because I knew all along that he admired her. But I did not know that she was in love with him. Did you?"

"No."

"At the beginning of our cruise, don't you remember that she used to snub him?"

I said nothing.

"But," he said, "I am sure he will make her happy. I shall be glad to see her settled. I had hoped to have her as a companion, now that I am alone," said he, in a shaky voice; "but a husband is better than an uncle for a girl, and I cannot question, from her manner of speaking to me just now, that she is really attached to the doctor."

I kept my voice very well, and I am sure that he had no suspicion of the truth. Between that girl and me there had been little passages full of encouragement on her part. I held my peace while Sir Mordaunt talked on, coming presently to his wife, and speaking of her with tears in his voice, if not in his eyes. Then, taking my chance, I crossed over to where Miss Tuke and Norie were standing, looking at the waning moon—a blushing emblem of my own idle dream—and addressing the girl with as much cordiality as I could infuse into my manner, I said that Sir Mordaunt had told me of her engagement, and that I would not lose a minute in offering her and Norie my sincere congratulations.

"Thank you very much, Mr. Walton," said she; and Norie added that he felt sure the news would give me pleasure.

And so ended a little business that everybody will smile at but I. But I relate it, because I doubt if the story of my shipwreck would be quite complete without it.

I put on a wooden face for the rest of the time, determined that Miss Tuke at all events should not suppose I considered myself jilted. But this matter hastened my departure from San Juan, where we arrived in due course. Sir Mordaunt begged me to stay until his wife's remains had been removed, and then accompany him and the others to Europe; but I told him I was anxious to get home, and an opportunity for leaving Porto Rico occurring three days after our arrival, I took leave of my companions, bidding poor Mrs. Stretton a tender farewell, in the full belief that I should never see her again.

Two months after my return to England, I received a long letter from Sir Mordaunt. He told me that he had brought his wife's remains with him, and that they were now interred in the family vault at——. Also (I should perhaps be surprised to hear), Mrs. Stretton had consented to come and take charge of his establishment, as housekeeper. He asked me to spend a fortnight with him, but I had other engagements, and could not get away.

Not very long after the receipt of this letter,

came an invitation to attend Ada Tuke's marriage. I could not go, though I would gladly have been present, if only to sustain the character of indifference I had assumed. However, I took care to call upon the bride and her husband on their return from abroad when passing through London, and, time being on my side, my impersonation could not have been better had my indifference been honest; and I was sure the bride went away convinced that any suspicions she might have had that I had been fond of her were altogether unfounded. Norie is now in practice in a town in the north of England, and I believe doing very well. Sir Mordaunt gave his niece five thousand pounds and a house of furniture, and I don't doubt they need all they can get, for the little Nories threaten to make a big family.

I often visited Sir Mordaunt, and when I first went down to his house I was pleased to find Tripshore installed there as a sort of all-round man, having no special duties, but lending a hand generally. He told me that Tom Hunter had left San Juan before the others, with a present from Sir Mordaunt of fifty pounds in his pocket, but what had become of him he did not know. Tripshore and the noble dog who had saved our lives were great friends, and always together, I heard. The fine animal knew me

at once, and it curiously delighted me to be remembered by him.

On every occasion of my visit to——I had the pleasure of shaking Mrs. Stretton by the hand and complimenting her on her looks. The baronet would tell me that she managed his household capitally, and that if she left him he would miss her as he would his right hand. His references to the late Lady Brookes gradually grew less frequent, whilst his praise of the shipwrecked widow improved in strength and quality; so that, exactly three years from the date of his arrival in England, I was not surprised to get a letter from him, in which he said that Mrs. Stretton had become Lady Brookes.

THE END.

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Russell, William Clark

The 'Lady Maud': schooner yacht a narrative of her loss on one of the Bahama cays, from the account of a guest on board

Bd.: Vol. II

1883

P.o.angl. 349 s-3/4
urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb11906561-9